Lilith

INDEPENDENT, JEWISH & FRANKLY FEMINIST

Intermarried and
Still Jewish

Jewish and
Muslim women
**Steam heat
in Tangier**

Analyzing our inner JAP?
**Our hair, our shoes,
our attitudes**

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Volume 30, No. 2, Summer 2005

Why is this magazine called Lilith? In the Garden of Eden, long before the eating of the apple, the Holy One created the first human beings—a man, Adam, and a woman, Lilith. Lilith said "We are equal because we are created from the same earth."

—from *The Alphabet of Ben Sira*, 23a-b

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Cover: Portrait of a Tel-Aviv woman by Rutu Modan. www.theartworksinc.com

Changing minds.

Why—and how—do people change their minds, and then their behaviors?

This season we're celebrating 20 years of women as Conservative rabbis (see page 8). The anniversary gives us an opportunity to look back on how the movement decided to change its position from negative to positive, with exhilaratingly good results both for women who want to be rabbis and for the Jewish community as a whole. So I have been thinking about how change happens. (Or, less passively, how we bring about change.)

I've had some failures in the change-making department. I was looking for a parking space recently in a crowded parking lot. I spotted another driver pulling out, drove up courteously behind her, waited until she pulled out, and began edging my car in. Whoa! To my shock, another driver, coming out of nowhere, swooped into the space and closed me out! I was dumbfounded. The move had been so rude, so unfair. So what did I do? I rolled down my window, of course, and asked calmly, "*Why* did you do that? That was a really *hostile* thing to do. You could see that I was pulling into this very spot." The other driver's response? He cursed me out, predictably, and stayed put right in the parking space, my efforts at reeducation utterly futile. And the friend sitting next to me, adding salt to the wound, pronounced her diagnosis: "*You* are the crazy one. You should have rolled down your window and cursed *him* out first!"

Got me to thinking about how we change people's thoughts and deeds—not mine, *his*.

I've lectured and taught that tikkun olam is a retail business, and that, like good deeds, social change happens incrementally, one on one. Childcare would be offered at all Jewish events because women helped the universe see that it takes a village to raise Jewish kids. Competitive salaries and good benefits would arrive like manna from heaven for the [mostly] women in the fields of Jewish schools and social-service agencies because women workers lobbied for them. With Jewish women swelling the ranks of professional and business graduate schools, of course they'd be recruited to lead Jewish organizations. Flexible hours for workers with responsibilities for children or others needed only to be proposed thoughtfully and employers would offer them.

Call my naïveté a character flaw. Enlightened self-interest obviously plays a big part in change.

In the rabbinate, women have shifted the valence of our liturgical and congregational lives, so that more and more women congregants are finding Judaism nourishing, both spiritually and intellectually. Perhaps it was a prescience about this benefit that spurred the leaders of the Conservative movement to decide to ordain women two decades ago; perhaps they realized that they had a magnet in women rabbis—not only would bright women want to become rabbis, but the presence of women on the bima would draw other women into services too. And this has, indeed, come to pass.

Now we're also witnessing a sophisticated shift in the often recalcitrant Jewish communal field, in those agencies where toiled legions of women Blu Greenberg once called "Jewish nuns." (She was referring not to celibacy but to selfless devotion to task, I believe.) Some agencies and organizations are now thinking along gender lines as never before—not by accident or because of some fortuitous alignment of the planets, but because they've had pointed out to them that it is to their advantage to have women on a leadership track and to create family-friendly workplaces.

Spurring much of this change, Advancing Women Professionals in the Jewish Community steps off in a different direction from the advocates who have for years been lobbying at the grassroots level for more women executives in the Jewish world. Here's what's different in change-making today: this new entity, led by Shifra Bronznick, has worked with the *leadership* of Jewish organizations in a model based on corporate human-resources practice, demonstrating to those in power that, ethics aside, it is in their own best interest to create policies encouraging a balance between work and non-work (dare we call it home life?). This new form of advocacy focuses not on the *bad* news—the suffering of the workers—but on the potential for these agencies to accomplish their missions better through more humane workplace policies which will attract and retain the best employees.

In the 21st Century, this means women as well as men. By offering flexible hours, for example, organizations like Hillel and agencies like New York's Jewish Board of Family and Children Services get to position themselves as relatively progressive employers and, into the bargain, try to attract stellar professionals who care about quality of life as well as quality of work. It's no surprise that Catalyst, the nonprofit working with corporations on gender issues, has found that people are happier and more roductive on the job if they have some control over their time.

But how deep will this focus on flex-time, family leave and other changes penetrate? Professionals in the Jewish community have long been expected to put personal life in second place and be available almost around the clock, as is the case for pulpit rabbis, for example. This may explain why fewer women rabbis want congregational positions. And it also may explain why one capable woman recruited for an executive position in the Jewish community is reported to have replied "Who would want this job?" The 20-year mark for women in the rabbinate provides a useful moment for us to pause and evaluate not just how we want to change the workplace, but also, urgently, how we want to live.

Susan

Susan Weidman Schneider
Editor-in-Chief

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readers respond

Naming

I thoroughly enjoyed Harriet Lerner's article about the other V word. I agree with her wholeheartedly about teaching our children the proper terminology. In fact when my daughter was around five years old and taking a bath, she pointed between her legs and asked what "it" was called. When I told her it was her vulva, she replied in a dreamy voice," Vulva, what a beautiful name that would be for a girl". I can tell you this now because she's thirty one years old and enjoys hearing (and I dare say, remembering) this story. G-d Bless You, Lilith magazine. You never disappoint!

Sheila Solomon-Shotwel
Grand Rapids MII

The spring issue of Lilith was rich in scope. I take issue with the title of one of the best pieces, "Autism Moms." The previous article on "vulva," states, "Unless we speak clearly we can't think clearly." "Autism Moms" sounds like the moms are autistic. Rather, the author has an autistic son. Big difference. I have traveled many similar roads with my Special Needs son who has Asperger's Syndrome which is on the Autistic spectrum. Diagnosing its range is challenging at best & critical because it points to different kinds of treatment. The article by Ms. Harp touched me deeply. Only its title missed the mark.

K. Friedberg
Wilmette IL

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Traditionally, the voice of the Jewish woman was not to be heard in public, lest it arouse men. **No more.** These pages are for news about Jewish women, **in our own strong voices.**

Teaching Teens to Read—in Jail

Rebecca Weinstein is drawn to jobs most other educators avoid. After graduating from college in 1993, she became a teacher in a New York City homeless shelter. Then she found work at a school for kids with serious behavior problems. And—in 1997—at a juvenile detention program.

None of her earlier experiences prepared her for what she would find at the Horizon Juvenile Center in New York City, one of three secure lock-ups for nine- to 15-year-olds who are awaiting trial. "Right before Christmas break, someone anonymously donated Harry Potter books for every kid inside. When I got back, one student, a 15-and-a-half-year-old boy who had killed a family member, came to class and all he could talk about was Harry Potter's broom. It dawned on me that if the kids had books they were interested in, they'd read."

Weinstein started bringing in books purchased with her own money: *The Guinness Book of World Records*; a history of crime and punishment; love poems; a rhyming dictionary. Then, one weekend, she ran into a 16-year-old former student on the street. "He told me he'd read his first book in jail." Weinstein says.

She started researching the connection between literacy, delinquency and incarceration and discovered a deep correlation. According to a University of Maryland study, teaching a person to read is more effective in reducing recidivism than punitive punishment. "It made so much sense," Weinstein says. "You're 15, and you can't read. Why would you go to school? When I sat with kids looking at the Guinness book, they'd say, 'Miss, what's that?' It sometimes took them 20 minutes to read the captions, but they'd do it if they wanted to figure something out."

Weinstein and requested permission to start a library at Horizon. "Actually, they already had a library, but it only had New Testaments, *The Cross and the Switchblade*, and an old G.E.D. book. Most students were not going to read these," she says. While the administration quickly approved Weinstein's proposal, she was told that there was no funding for the project.

"It seemed so unfair," she says. "Adult prisons have to have a law library, but it's not mandated that kids have books." Weinstein's outrage, like her optimism, is contagious. "When kids are locked up there is a moment when you can reach them, because outside distractions aren't there. For whatever reason most of these kids missed out on reading instruction. Forty percent read below the fourth grade level and 25 percent read below a second grade level; 49 percent qualify for special ed. There is a window for these kids when they're incarcerated."

Weinstein has set up the non-profit Literacy for Incarcerated Teens [LIT] to establish libraries in each of the city's youth detention programs. She is proud of the organization's achievements. "A few days ago," she laughs, "I saw a kid in class with his head on his desk. At first, I assumed he was sleeping, but then I looked again and saw that he was faking sleep so that he could read a book. The most exciting thing for me is to hear kids arguing about what they've read. I've seen kids tear the pages out of a book. As far as I'm concerned, if they think something in a book is worth taking, I'm delighted."

—*Eleanor J. Bader*

For more information, contact lit@prisonreader.org

"I do not think we will reach a point of civil war—and even though it may sound terrible, the price we pay to disengage will always be a lesser toll than a war imposes on us." Referring to the Six Day War of 1967, Dayan said, **"It goes to show how one sucessful war can complicate your life and the life of your children and granchildren."**

—***Yael Dayan**, deputy mayor of Tel Aviv-Yafo and senior member of the Meretz/Yachad party, visited New York in May to speak about this summer's withdrawal from Gaza.*

Voices Missing, or, Why You Read Lilith

Researchers found that although women now make up more than half the U.S. population and hold positions of power in government and business, men are relied on as sources in the news more than twice as often as women. The only topic category where women crossed the 50% threshold was lifestyle stories. **Women's opinions are notably absent from reports about politics, the military and foreign policy.**

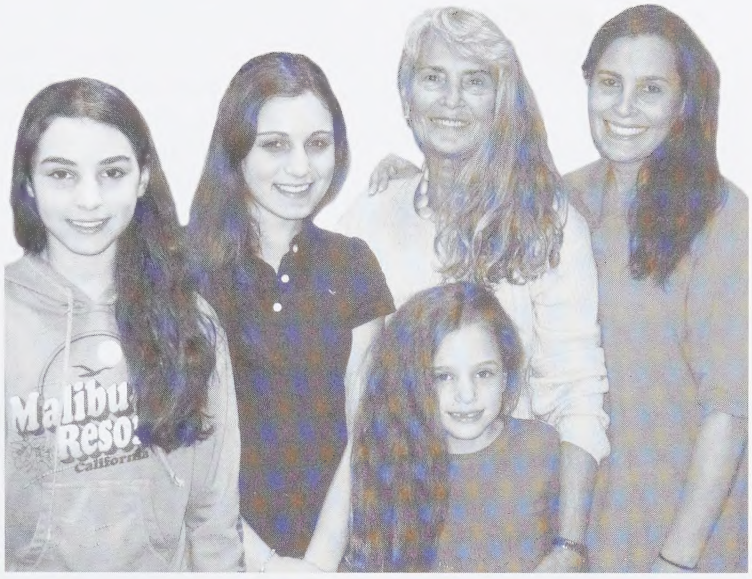
In the general media, women are quoted in stories far less frequently than men, 33 percent compared with 76 percent. Daily newspapers do the best job of citing women, though less than 50 percent of the articles surveyed included a female voice; cable television had the worst performance.

—from May 2005 report from the Project for Excellence in Journalism at Columbia Journalism School.

Haircuts, a New Bat Mitzvah Ritual

A couple of years ago, **Ruth Ades**, *had short salt-and-pepper hair. Then one of her granddaughters, preparing for her bat mitzvah, decided to grow her own hair long in order to contribute it to the organization Locks of Love, where it would be made into wigs for children who'd lost their hair from medical conditions. Soon all the females in the family decided to join in the mitzvah project. While Locks of Love doesn't make wigs out of the gray hair they receive (Ades's own tresses yielded a significant 14 inches), they sell this hair in order to cover the costs of fabricating the wigs.*

Just before the joint bat mitzvah celebration of Ades's granddaughters **Marina** *and* **Anna** *in New Bedford, Massachusetts, this spring, the women and girls got together for their haircuts. Here, the before and after photos, and Ruth Ades's message that accompanied them.*



Left to right are: Anna Goodwin, age 12; Marina Goodwin, age 13; Ruth Ades, grandmother; Sara Ades Goodwin, mother. Front: Tovya Goodwin, age 7.

Well, the cutting is over for my daughter, **Sara**, her three daughters—Marina, 13-1/2, Anna, 12, **Tovya**, 7—and myself. The anticipation of waiting 2-1/2 years to grow a minimum of 10 inches of hair ended with 5 swift cuts, and 54 inches of hair in hand, which is being sent to Locks of Love for wigs for children who are in need.

At my granddaughters' joint b'not mitzvah April 2, their Torah portion was *Tazria*, skin disease, and the girls spoke about the mitzvah they were doing by growing their hair to be given to children with hair loss.

They also purchased 300 bracelets, which were handed out by their young cousins in baskets after their dvar Torah was presented. The bracelets are made especially for Locks of Love, and the proceeds all go to this non-profit organization. The remaining bracelets were given out at Makeovers, the beauty salon in Easton, Massachusetts which did our haircutting and styling without charge.

To take on a similar project: locksoflove.org

"In her heart she is a mourner for those who have not survived. In her soul she is a warrior for those who are now as she was then....And each year she is stronger, and there are more of her."

—*Andrea Dworkin,* Letters from a War Zone: Writings, 1976-1989 *(New York: Dutton, 1988). Dworkin, 58, died suddenly in April 2005. She wrote provocative and stirring novels and essays about her own life as a woman and a Jew, and crusaded against pornography, violence against women, anti-Semitism and rigid interpretations of gender.*

After an Indiana judge on May 30 denied the request of Planned Parenthood of Indiana to stop the state from accessing the medical records of its young clients, it may be even harder for doctors to gather an accurate health history from women and teens....

"What people leave out are the things they're ashamed of or perceive others to have judgment about," says **Leslie Rottenberg**, senior director of social services for Planned Parenthood of New York. She cited sexually transmitted diseases, drugs and abortions as likely omissions.

—Ann Farmer in women's E-News (subscribe at womensenews.org)

Queerspawn—What's That??

You've heard of the *Nanny Diaries* and the *Bridget Jones Diaries*, but welcome to the world of "*Queer Spawn Diaries*": **Nava EtShalom** and **Chana Joffe-Walt** are two young Jewish women right out of college who co-produce a web and radio project by and for the grown children of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) parents.

Nava and Chana grew up only a couple of blocks away from each other in Philadelphia and didn't realize until their teens that they shared a similar family structure—they both have heterosexual rabbi fathers and lesbian mothers. Both of them grew up in Jewish communities that had strong committments to social justice. Now, Chana and Nava are working with other grown children of LGBT families from communities across the US to get their stories told.

Nava says, "There has been such intense debate in the mainstream media about gay marriage and gay families, but we're just not hearing from the people for whom queer family is home." To that end, they've launched www.queerspawn.org, part of a growing independent radio and documentary movement using internet technology. Their Queerspawn Diaries project hosts a web-based archive of interviews in the hopes that these self-produced narratives will put a real face on the kids who have grown up in LGBT households and allow them to tell their own stories.

Chana adds, "We were sick of seeing so many materials about us produced by people who are not themselves kids of LGBT families, always asking the same questions like: 'What's it like at school? Are you gay too?' Sexuality and school are not the only arenas in which being from a queer family affects our identity or experience. What about religion, friendships, activism, and work?"

With internet radio on the rise, young people across the country are going outside of mainstream media to find their voices and share their stories. *Diaries* reporters range in age, gender identity, and location—like **David Reese**, who grew up in the tiny one-stoplight town of Mayville, New York, or **Rebecca DeCola**, raised in Manhattan.

"What does "conventional" parenting mean anyway?" Nava asks. "We're excited to be raising as many questions as we answer, to present new ways of exploring what it means to be proud queer family as we tell stories about home."

—Orli Cotel

For more information or to listen to Diaries, *visit www.queerspawn.org.*

The First Read-Aloud Book for Alzheimer's Sufferers

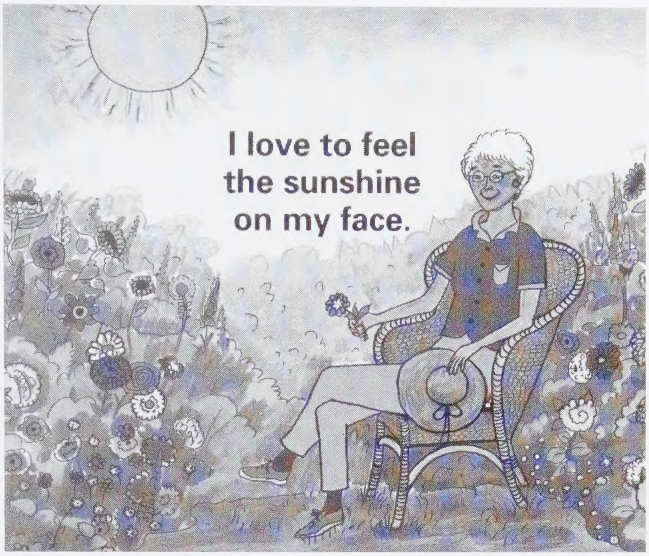
"Mom, would you read this page out loud to me?" I was sitting next to my mother on the couch in the den. The words I had written for her to read to me were on a page on her lap. She looked steadily at me.

I looked into her brown eyes, smiled and said, "Mom, I would really love you to read these words out loud to me." She looked away from me and down at the sentence. She paused for a long moment. Then, in a strong voice, a voice I hadn't heard in a long time, my mother read: "I love to feel the sunshine on my face."

I was thrilled to hear her speak. In 1998, my mother, **Shirley Burdick,** was diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease. Since 2000, as she entered more advanced stages of the disease, she'd spoken almost entirely in monosyllables.

I wondered if Mom wasn't speaking because the disease had made her "lose her way" to the words. Experts explained that people with Alzheimer's eventually experience disruptions in the language centers of the brain—some sooner and others later in the disease process. I wanted to help Mom find her way to more words. I determined that I would round up some words for my mother to read and say out loud and give them to her in a book of her own. And since I was choosing the words, I wanted them to be positive and enthusiastic.

The joy I felt when my mother read them aloud must have been a lot like the joy my parents had felt more than 50 years earlier when I first read out loud to them. "Mom, how does the sun feel on your face?" I waited patiently. Another long



moment went by. Her eyes met mine. I asked again, "Mom, how do you feel when you are in the sunshine?" Another moment, and then I could tell she knew what she wanted to say. "Warm" my mother said. "Oh," I said, "The sun feels warm on your face? It feels warm on my face too!" Then I asked, "Do you like to feel the sunshine on your face?" Her eyes were shining. "Yes," she said, "I do!"

—Lydia Burdick

The Sunshine on My Face, *by Lydia Burdick, published by Health Professions Press, will be available on their website in July. Go to healthprofessions.com.*

Muslim Women Struggle to Lead Prayers. Does This Sound Familiar??

Asra Nomani, author of *Standing Alone in Mecca* and former Wall Street Journal reporter, led a mixed-gender prayer [in March] inside a prayer hall at Brandeis University....

Traditionalists say women can lead an all-women congregation in prayer. Less conservative interpretations of Islam say a woman can lead her mixed-gender family, but only in the privacy of her home.

But the public, mixed gender prayers...challenge traditions maintained by clerics. Amid worldwide controversy, the prayers are being noted by religious scholars as the start of a trend towards female spiritual public leadership in Islam.

In another departure from tradition, women...stood next to the men, not behind them. In mosques, women usually pray behind the men or in a separately designated area, sometimes overlooking the men from a balcony. According to custom, women can see men pray, but men usually are not supposed to see women during prayer.

—Rasha Elass, from Women's E-News (womensenews.org)

The settings of novellist Bataya Gur were always

"closed societies—a psychoanalytic institute, a kibbutz, the world of classical musicians—whose tensions, factionalism and prejudices, critics observed, mirrored Israel's own."

—from Margalit Fox's New York Times obituary of Israeli mystery writer Batya Gur, May 30, 2005.

20 Years of Conservative Women Rabbis (that's capital-C Conservative)

Yes, truly cause for celebration: 20 years of ordination of women as Conservative rabbis by the Jewish Theological Seminary. In fact, following the standing-room-only screening of a new video "And the Gates Opened: Women in the Rabbinate" in March at the JTS, the women rabbis and rabbinical students posed for a photograph, then spontaneously began singing and dancing.

In all fairness, we should not expect this video to document the ferocity of JTS faculty opposition to ordaining women back in the 1970s and '80s. Despite long interviews with Sally Preisand (America's first Reform woman rabbi), **Sandy Sasso** (first Reconstructionist woman rabbi), **Amy Eilberg** (first Conservative woman rabbi) and numerous other highly articulate women and men, the impression here is that the ordination of women as rabbis was simply an idea whose time had come; that Chancellor **Gerson Cohen** took the lead and the gates swung open.

Not so.

The Conservative movement's arguments against ordaining women rabbis back in the 1970s were not primarily halakhic; they were more a scholarly defense of the status quo. If we look back, we have a useful opportunity to observe how attitudes change. For example, in the video Rabbi **Gordon Tucker**, executive director of the commission to study the issue in the early 1980s, who became dean of the JTS Rabbinical School when the first women rabbis were ordained, hails the contributions women rabbis have made to the vitality of Conservative Judaism. Back in 1977, Tucker, then a 25-year-old instructor in Philosophies of Judaism and assistant to the Chancellor, told Lilith, "If present sociological conditions make a woman rabbi 'peculiar' to most people on a subconscious level…this gets in the way of fostering spiritual growth. I think it's unfortunate, but I feel a certain responsibility to something more than my own proclivities."

Interviewed in "Gates," **Rabbi Joel Roth**, the Louis Finkelstein Professor of Talmud and Jewish Law at the Seminary, provides the halakhic reasoning for ordaining women rabbis. It's an ironic moment. Though halakha was not needed to exclude women from ordination in Conservative Judaism, it was needed to justify opening the door to them.

The women in the video are articulate but modest. Amy Eilberg, ordained at the JTS in

1985, says she was in the right place at the right time. We hear many of the women say we've come a long way, and there's a long way still to go.

Who was in the trenches back then who might teach us something about the way such important changes are made? **Francine Klagsbrun**, author, columnist and feminist, was on the commission that traversed the U.S. hearing testimony from congregants and others before the issue was decided. Once the commission approved ordaining women, Klagsbrun carried the banner, lecturing throughout the country, but she is not heard in this documentary. Nor is **Judith Hauptman**, the first woman to teach Talmud at the Seminary, and the first to insist that a JTS female student be allowed to study Talmud. Just four years ago, Hauptman, a noted scholar, prolific writer, an E. Billie Ivry Professor of Talmud and Rabbinics at JTS, was denied permission by Chancellor **Ismar Schorsch** to become a rabbinical student at the Seminary. Schorsch argued that it would be demeaning for her to sit in the same classes as her students. (Instead, Hauptman was ordained two years ago by the nondenominational Academy of Jewish Religion.)

Can we today imagine what it was like to be refused admission to the Seminary's Rabbinical School on sexual grounds? If we just change "woman" to "gay or lesbian" we can hear the gates slam shut again. In the midst of the March celebration, a hoax press release from the

"And the Gates Opened: Women in the Rabbinate." Produced by The Jewish Theological Seminary with Diva Communications. Written and produced by **Debra Gonsher Vinik.** Premiered on ABC Television. Running time 58 minutes. $35 from JTS, 212-678-8902. For future broadcast dates, check news & events at www.jtsa.edu

For a copy of **Amy Stone**'s 1977 LILITH article about the resistance to women rabbis, "Gentlemen's Agreement at the Seminary," send $5 to Lilith Magazine 250 W. 57th St. Suite 2432, New York, NY 10107

anonymous members of Jewish Women Watching announcing that the JTS was going to ordain gay and lesbian rabbis in 2010 was, understandably, suppressed.

A week after the screening, three of the six "Gates" panelists—Rabbis **Susan Grossman**, Tucker and Roth—were among the rabbis at a special meeting of the Rabbinical Assembly Committee on Jewish Law and Standards reopening the question of the status of gays and lesbians within Conservative Judaism, including ordination. Papers presented at the meeting are now being studied, and a new ruling may emerge from the committee's March 2006 meetings. Those believing it's time for another change might take heart from Rabbi Grossman's words on women in the rabbinate: "Torah is immutable. Jewish law evolves."

—Amy Stone

Religious Restrictions on Your Medical Care

Pharmacist refusals to fill legally valid prescriptions for contraception constitute a serious erosion of reproductive rights and impede women's access to critical health care.

The National Women's Law Center's Pharmacy Refusal Project is compiling a register of pharmacy refusal incidents to document the scope of the problem. If you or someone you know has been denied a prescription for emergency contraception or another contraceptive, please contact Rachel Vogelstein at rvogelstein@nwlc.org.

The National Women's Law Center (nwlc.org) also has a brochure —called ASK!—suggesting how to find out what religious or moral beliefs a hospital or health-care provider might have that could limit your access to health care. It's worth asking such questions as: "My mom doesn't want artificial nutrition and hydration—will you honor her wishes?" "Will my health insurance pay for my birth control pills?" "Does this doctor support saving my eggs before I have chemo?" and more.

Trying to Close Out Israeli Academics

When faculty at British universities proposed a boycott this spring against Israeli academics, threatening to deny them access to conferences and other events, **Frances Raday**, *President of the Israel Association of Feminist and Gender Studies and Professor of Law at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, published an open letter from Israeli feminist academics to their colleagues in England. Here, some excerpts:*

We recently learned that (British) Association of University Teachers, at its forthcoming council, is to debate a decision to boycott three Israeli universities for their alleged complicity with the Israeli government's policies on the Palestinian territories. Such a decision would reflect an assumption, widely shared by academics on the left (particularly in Europe), that Israel is a colonialist if not an apartheid state, which systematically and gratuitously violates the human rights of Palestinians both in the territories and in Israel. It is an attitude that stigmatizes us Israelis as lepers, beyond the pale, not fit for human interaction. Israelis have become the one currently legitimate case for social exclusion in the eyes of those very people who are fighting social exclusion in all its forms....

The resolution is misguided on two grounds. First, it targets Israel in a disproportionate way. On a graded scale of evil intent, can it really be said that Israel is the worst offender in the world, deserving of the one and only boycott by left wing intellectuals? In condemning Israel, how many of England's academics have employed **Karl Popper**'s empathy test? Would they like to change places with the Israeli population and have to deal with our problems: 60 years of mass immigration of refugee populations, a territory the size of Wales, three wars in which the State's survival was threatened, deaths from terrorism and suicide bombings relatively equivalent to recurrent 11th of September tragedies? Second, the resolution ostracizes and silences the academic community—one of the most important sources of criticism and debate of the Israeli government's policies.

As feminist academics, many of us, too, are highly critical of our government's policy on occupation and settlement. In order to disseminate our work and our criticism, we need open channels of communication in the international academic community. Boycotts such as the one proposed, by undercutting the international and consequently the national status of the academic institutions within which we work, only weaken the ability of those institutions to serve as forums for the voicing of critical and alternative views—a role in which Israel's universities serve honorably....

The academic community in Israel enjoys full academic freedom, as is clear from the wide divergence of views that emanate from it. The proposed boycott by British academics thus must be seen as an attempt to curtail academic freedom.

The vote to boycott was, after considerable outcry, rescinded.

Misery beyond the Mezzuzah

Relationship Abuse in the Jewish Community

by Letty Cottin Pogrebin

A woman is battered every 15 seconds in the U.S. Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women. More than one in four North American women will experience abuse at some point in her life and, as we know, Jews are not immune—whether we're Orthodox, unaffiliated, or anything in between. Bromides such as "Jewish men don't batter," or "Jewish men make the best husbands," or "Jewish families are safe havens in a hostile world," are about as true as "There are no Jewish alcoholics."

Socioeconomic advantage allows some men to commit relationship crimes without suffering the legal consequences. The fact is middle- or upper-class men (which describes most Jewish men) are far less likely to be accused or convicted of battering. They serve less time in jail, and where there are alternative sentences available, such as mandatory batterers' re-education groups, they are frequently sentenced to those or are allowed to seek private therapeutic help.

Faye Wilbur, a social worker who serves the Orthodox community in Boro Park, New York, told me, "Abusive men present well. They're charming to everyone but their wives and when the wife threatens to expose their abusive behavior, they say 'No one will believe you.' Often they're right."

Sadly, in our community, horrendous acts of violence and sexual abuse occur behind closed doors, even those with *mezzuzot* on their doorposts. The Sages viewed the mezzuzah as an appeal to divine protection, a symbol of God's saving the Israelites from the tenth plague. But protection is hard to come by for the women cowering behind those doors, certain that they are the only Jews being brutalized in the place where they are supposed to be most safe.

Whatever their religious and ethnic background, some men hurt women and children not just because males tend to be physically stronger and economically autonomous, but because—despite feminism's best efforts—male dominance is still an entrenched cultural assumption.

The more patriarchal the family, the more likely the abuse of women. Where there is privilege, there is power. Likewise, where there is dependency there is powerlessness—for instance, when a wife has no control over family money, or when a husband's mistreatment of his wife gives the children permission to disrespect or bully their mother. To break the cycle of abuse, we must restructure the patriarchal family into a social arrangement based on equality, democracy, and financial parity. And we must challenge rigid sex role socialization in the home and school, and dysfunctional paradigms of male supremacy and female subordination—especially those that equate masculinity with dominance and femininity with submission.

Feminists and other anti-violence advocates have "de-normalized" men's use of force to control women. They have also deconstructed men's excuses. When a man says his partner pushes his buttons and makes him see red or makes him lose it, they say "If your rage is so uncontrollable, how come you don't punch people out at the office? If you can't control it, how come when you're slamming your wife against the wall, you always manage to stop before you leave marks, break bones, or kill her?"

> A victim of anti-Semitism gets **more attention** than a woman whose husband **smacks her around in her own kitchen**.

The big question remains: Why do some women tolerate abuse? Often it is not because they're masochists or weaklings but because they're fierce protectors of the family, and the perpetrator has threatened to hurt or take away their children if the wife resists or leaves. Crime statistics suggest it can be even more dangerous to leave than to stay: domestic violence victims are at greatest risk of being killed in the period immediately after they walk out. Other women simply do not want to end the relationship, they just want to make it work. "Don't jail him, fix him," they say.

While religious women of all faiths tend to stay in abusive relationships longer than women of other groups, observant

Jewish women endure mistreatment and humiliation partly because our tradition teaches us it's a woman's responsibility to keep the family together and maintain *shalom bayit,* domestic tranquility. Likewise, religious women tend not to go to shelters or take legal action, because the Jewish feminine ideal is to stay married and raise kids. They don't seek help, not just because they're afraid of the husband but because they fear exposure would make the family the subject of *lashon hara*—evil gossip—and spoil their children's marriage prospects. Children of Holocaust survivors often choose not to go public with their complaints in order to spare their parents further pain and suffering. Immigrant women may feel especially powerless because of the language barrier, lack of awareness of their rights, or the fact that their residence status is dependent on their husband's.

These are complicated reasons, but the result is the same. In the American Jewish world, the sad truth is, though victims of domestic violence are far more numerous than victims of anti-Semitic violence, abused women and children get only a fraction of the attention and resources of the community. Ironically, a victim has a better chance of being supported and defended by the community if she is beaten up by an anti-Semitic stranger or raped in the elevator of her building, than if her husband smacks her around in her own kitchen.

Why has it taken so long for Jewish organizations, leaders, rabbis, and the rest of us to acknowledge, much less try to end, the abuse happening in Jewish families? Why do so many still turn away or take refuge in denial?

Partly, I think it's because 95 percent of those suffering domestic violence are women, and in the eyes of some Jews what happens to Jewish women isn't exactly happening to the Jews.

I see a parallel in our community's response to comedic insult: Most Jews are deeply offended by "kike" jokes. We don't laugh at them, we rebuke those who tell them, we don't tell them ourselves. Yet JAP jokes are not only tolerated by Jews, they're told by Jews. (See Lilith's original analysis in Fall 1987.) Never mind that the stereotype of the Jewish American Princess is wholly defamatory—spoiled, imperious, materialistic, sexually withholding, acquisitive, narcissistic, and manipulative. "JAP" still is not perceived as an anti-Semitic slur. Why? Because the butt of the joke is a woman. Just as sexism kashers [makes kosher] anti-Jewish humor, it kashers the abuse of Jews who happen to be female.

How can survivors of domestic violence take ownership of the issue and contribute to its solution if they're scared, ashamed, or economically and politically powerless? How can community programs create an appropriate response if the community is intrinsically sexist and patriarchal?

What's surprising is that our history and heritage haven't made us more sensitive to suffering. Deuteronomy's thundering exhortation, "*Tzedek, tzedek, tirdof*"—Justice, justice, shalt thou pursue—doesn't promise justice from on high, it demands constant pursuit of it on earth. Now it's time for the community to put its money where its values lie. Prevention and education may be the long-term solution but what do we do in meantime?

Suggest that philanthropists who support birthright Israel also underwrite the birthright to be safe in a Jewish home. Make domestic abuse prevention a line item in every Jewish defense organization's budget. Organizations, synagogue social action committees and Jewish community centers must host speakers on domestic violence, publicize hotlines, raise funds, and provide job networks so that victims can become self-supporting if they wish. Synagogues and JCCs must put posters on the bulletin boards and help-line stickers on the stall doors in the women's bathroom.

Seminaries must not graduate rabbis until they're prepared to do this work. Day schools and Hebrew school teachers must provide a route out of secrecy for kids who are witnessing or experiencing abuse. We need a community-wide public awareness campaign on relationship violence similar to what has been done for other afflictions suffered by Jews, like breast cancer and Tay-Sachs. We need the entire Jewish leadership to sign onto a zero tolerance blitz.

Domestic violence is not just a private crisis, it deprives the whole society of the talents of half the population. It bruises the body, but it also suffocates the spirit and squelches the will to achieve. Women who are battered, infantilized, isolated, deprived of financial autonomy, and otherwise controlled by their partners don't have the will or confidence to contribute their God-given strengths to the community. Because we need each human being's participation in our world, the abuse of women is a crime against us all.

Letty Cottin Pogrebin, a founding editor of Ms. Magazine, is the author of nine books, most recently *Three Daughters*, a novel, and *Getting Over Getting Older*, a memoir. This essay is adapted from her keynote address delivered at Jewish Women International's conference on domestic violence in the Jewish community.

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Forbidden by Jane Ellen Iburl

Old wives say I keep the doctor away.
Sunshine realized, I hang from the tree
like a red monkey dangling possibilities
within your reach. Sleepwalk or wake
up. The choice is yours. Who is this
God you fear so much? I offer everything
right on the tip of your tongue.

Jane Ellen Ibur is a widely published poet who lives in St Louis. She teaches primarily in housing projects, homeless shelters and prison, is lead faculty for the Community Arts Training Institute, co-director of the Gifted Writers Project, and co-host for 12-1/2 years of Literature for the Halibut on community radio KDHX.

Lilith announces

The Second Annual Charlotte Newberger Poetry Competition

Submit your edgy, exciting poetry—touching in any way on Jewish women's experience—to Lilith by **October 20, 2005**.

First-, second- and third-prize winners and any honorable mentions will be announced in Lilith's Winter 2005-06 issue.

Your name and contact information on each page; single side only, double spaced. No submissions will be returned. Submit by postal mail only, postmarked by October 20, 2005, to:

Charlotte Newberger Poetry Competition
Lilith
250 West 57th Street
Suite 2432
New York, NY 10107

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STILL JEWISH?

What It Means Now to Be a Jewish Woman in an Interfaith Marriage

by Jeri B. Zeder

At various times in the last century in America, we intermarried Jewish women have been reviled as "decimators" of the Jewish people, declared prematurely "dead" by our own parents, and seen rabbis publicly turn their backs on our husbands, the fathers of our children, in synagogue. We've been surveyed, counted, and sorted into categories we don't necessarily claim for ourselves. We've had lots to say, but until now we have rarely been heard as our own unique demographic.

Keren McGinity has just completed a study of Jewish American women who married non-Jews. I agreed to be one of her subjects. Though I have not personally lived through every horror story listed above—my parents, for example, did not say kaddish for me when I married my non-Jewish husband, whom they love—I had experienced enough. One of the first things I told McGinity was that I was not interested in participating in a study that was going to view my marriage as an unmitigated disaster of Hitlerian proportions. That was not her angle, and maybe because of her earnestness—or the coupling of her Jewish first name with a decidedly not-Jewish last name—I chose to trust her and accept her invitation to talk.

McGinity asked me about my background, our courtship, religious attitudes, power negotiations and more. Questions like: "Did you and your husband make any compromises before getting engaged?" and "If you had to do it all over again, would you intermarry?"

McGinity herself is one of "us": a Jewish woman married to a Gentile man. She's also, now, a Ph.D. from Brown. Her just-completed dissertation, "Still Jewish: A History of Women and Intermarriage in America," is the first gendered history of intermarriage and the first historical, exclusive look at American Jewish women who intermarried during the Twentieth Century. McGinity interviewed 42 Boston-area women of Ashkenazi descent from Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox backgrounds, whose first, second, or third marriages were to non-Jewish men they married between 1938 and 2000; the oldest woman was 92 at the time of her interview.

Other scholars—sociologists, psychologists, and demographers—have studied intermarriage and how attitudes toward it have shifted over time. Usually we look at population studies and their offspring—theories on why Jews intermarry, programs to prevent intermarriage, injunctions against rabbis performing intermarriages, and so on—in the present tense, for the substance of what they say, and their implications. But McGinity is a historian. In her work—as in our own experience—we intermarried Jewish women take center stage. The

When a woman has a Christmas tree because she no longer considers herself Jewish, it isn't the same as when, say, a woman has a Christmas tree out of respect for her widowed mother-in-law who had no one else to spend Christmas with.

most important truth she points to is this: that intermarried Jewish women are defining for themselves what a Jewish family is—and those definitions, while they may not please some, feel authentically Jewish for the people who are creating them.

When she speaks publicly about her work, as she did in April in Newton, Massachusetts, McGinity cautions up front that the women she interviewed do not make up a statistically valid random sample. Her approach is qualitative. "I'm using the personal not simply to quantify how many people are attending services, lighting candles, having or not having a Christmas tree," she says. "I'm more interested in what having or not having a Christmas tree means." When a woman has a Christmas tree because she no longer considers herself Jewish, it isn't the same as when, say, a woman has a Christmas tree out of respect for her widowed mother-in-law who had no one else to spend Christmas with, McGinity's thinking implies.

Comparing these experiences over the span of 10 decades, McGinity asserts that what intermarriage meant for Jewish women in the first half of the century is quite different from what it meant in the second half—a finding consistent with those of other researchers. A primary catalyst for change was feminism, she claims. Jewish women marrying in the latter decades of the century not only felt less constricted by community expectations, but were also more assertive about wanting a Jewish home, stating clearly that they wanted this, and what's more, they could imagine a marriage and a Jewish home without a Jewish man in the house.

The words of writer Mary Antin, author of *The Promised Land* (1912) and an immigrant from the Pale of Settlement who married a Lutheran in 1901, speak of a new world where women could marry for love, and were freer than they were in the Pale to choose a different way of life. McGinity quotes from her writings: "When I came to America I lightly dropped the religious forms that I had mocked before…"

Though not quite Jewish, Antin did not embrace Christianity. When push came to shove, she declared: "I can no more return to the Jewish fold than I can return to my mother's womb; neither can I in decency continue to enjoy my accidental personal immunity from the penalties of being a Jew in a time of virulent anti-Semitism. The least I can do, in my need to share the sufferings of my people, is declare that I am one of them."

McGinity reminds us too of Rose Pastor Stokes (1879-1933), and Anna Strunsky (1877-1964), also immigrant Jewish women who intermarried in the early 1900s. Stokes was a socialist and anti-war activist; Strunsky, a writer. "They for the most part moved into their husbands' and mainstream social circles," McGinity reports. "They left the Jewish fold, more than not."

The women McGinity spoke with who intermarried in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s felt the sting of anti-Semitism and tried to submerge their Jewish identities. "I'll always admit that I'm Jewish if asked," one woman said, "but I don't come forward all the time and say that I am." Another woman, a World War II refugee from Vienna, explained that anti-Semitism had influenced her decision to marry a non-Jew in 1949. "In some ways, I've wondered lately whether I was running away from all of this," she said. Several of McGinity's interviewees reported that

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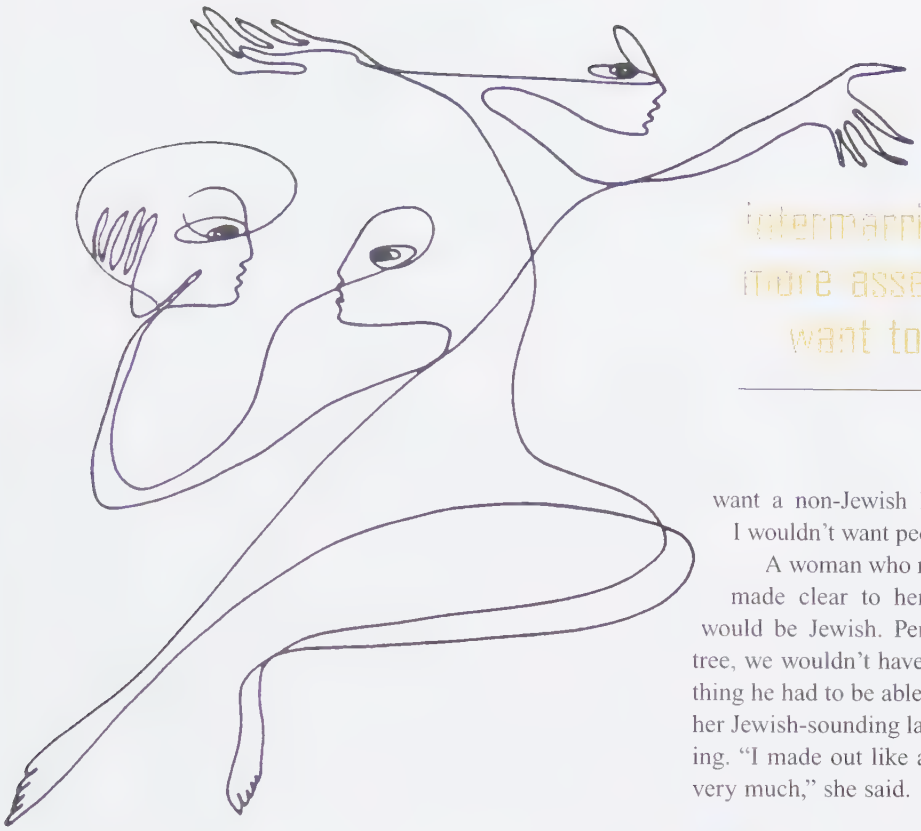

Thanks to feminism, intermarried Jewish women are more assertive now, saying they want to have a Jewish home.

their knowledge of Jewish life was too sketchy to pass on to their children. Some became Unitarians and ceased to consider themselves Jewish at all. Yet all these women were "still Jewish," in McGinity's eyes, in a different sense. One of the women who converted to Unitarianism recounted that, after attending a bar mitzvah, she remarked to her husband, "I was the only person there who wasn't Jewish." His response? "But you are." Even for those who had converted, "no one let a Jew forget she was a Jew," McGinity says. "Jewishness was inescapable, whether they claimed it for themselves or not."

Influenced by the diminishing ethnic and racial boundaries of the time, and the growing fascination with ethnicity (think Black is Beautiful, and the rise of Jewish pride after the Six-Day War of 1967), McGinity's women who intermarried in the 1960s and 70s felt free to marry gentile men while at the same time—unlike their counterparts in earlier decades—strongly and loudly affirming their Jewish identity. One woman, who married a non-Jew in 1969, told McGinity that a powerful influence was "this idea that we're all the same and that…the way to solve a lot of the conflicts and problems—because it was the civil rights movement we were just coming out of—was that people would intermarry." (When this woman's father learned of her intention to marry a Japanese-American, he warned her, chillingly, "Remember Pearl Harbor.")

These decades also saw the rise of second-wave feminism and then a distinctly Jewish feminism. For some women in McGinity's sample, even the feminist question of whether to change over to a husband's last name had a Jewish twist. Every time she met someone new, said one woman who took her husband's non-Jewish-sounding name, she would work into the conversation the fact that she was Jewish. Another woman, who chose to keep her birth name, told McGinity, "I did not want a non-Jewish last name…because I am Jewish and I wouldn't want people to think that I wasn't."

A woman who married in 1978 told McGinity that she made clear to her husband-to-be that their household would be Jewish. Period. "We wouldn't have a Christmas tree, we wouldn't have Christmas lights, and that was something he had to be able to live with." She insisted that he take her Jewish-sounding last name, and they wound up hyphenating. "I made out like a bandit on this one. I did not give up very much," she said.

Intermarriage rates, which had been creeping steadily upward, soared at the end of the Twentieth Century, from 2 percent in the years 1900-1920 to nearly 50 percent by the year 2000. There was unprecedented hysteria in the Jewish community about intermarriage, as clergy and scholars issued warnings about a new impending "Holocaust," this one precipitated by love, not hate. But women who intermarried between 1980 and 2000 tell a different story. Many describe a vibrant commitment to living Jewish lives in Jewish families. "My parents think I'm a religious fanatic now, because I say the prayers on Friday night," one Jewish woman told McGinity.

Not only do they claim a Jewish identity for themselves; many intermarried women also have insisted on passing Judaism on to their children. "If we don't do it, it won't get done," one interviewee asserted. These wives, unchallenged, are in charge; they are their family's Jewish "experts." Their role as the family's Jewish spiritual leaders has made them, perhaps, work harder at living a Jewish life than they would have otherwise. Explaining her and her husband's roles in raising Jewish children, one woman said, "I am carrying more weight around here and with my family because my husband is looking to me on different holidays to show the way. So maybe that has made me stiffen my back a bit and do some reading and learn how to carry the show, like maybe I wouldn't have to if I'd married someone else who is Jewish."

Ironically, at the same time as many intermarried Jewish women were working hard to build Jewish families, some were being ostracized at synagogues. One woman reported that the rabbi made her gentile husband sit with the congregation, rather than with her on the bima, during their baby's

continued on page 37

My Wife Prays by Yakov Azriel

She stands in a corner and sighs;
Closing her eyes,
My wife prays.

I listen to the silence
As her lips move without sound,
As she sways

Back and forth slightly. Her prayer
Transforms this room with its radiance, its halo
And its haze:

A cave where pious scholars unravel secrets
Of the hidden Torah; a lens through which
Angels gaze

To ponder the deeds we mortals do;
A promontory where a warrior
Bravely slays

A fire-breathing leviathan with six scaled wings;
A garden full of mazes in which an
Infant plays

With an adder and a cobra in each hand, and laughs.
Watching her pray, I entreat God, that
All my days

Be worthy of a footnote
In the prayer-book my wife holds
As she prays.

Yakov Azriel recently published his first full-length collection of poetry, *Threads from a Coat of Many Colors: Poems on Genesis* (Time Being Books). His poems have been published in the US, the UK and Israel.

Zegota by Davi Walders

Zofia Kossak-Szczucka (1890-1968), Polish Catholic writer, and **Wanda Filipowicz**, a Socialist, formed Zegota (The Council for Aid to the Jews) in 1942, saving thousands until being betrayed in 1945. Zegota was declared Righteous Among the Nations by Israel in 1963.

Just the two of us in the chaos
of ghetto round-ups. Zofia and Wanda,
Wanda and Zofia, begging parents
for the children, catching them as they
were thrown. Every day, we came
here for the children. *Umshlagplatz.*
A quarter million deported, ripped out

of the heart of Warsaw. We had many
names, changed as often where we slept.
Veronika, they called me. Alicia, they called
Wanda. Also, another, Irena Sendlerowa—
the Gestapo broke her legs, her feet, every
bone. She never talked, never healed.

We found other tiny ones starving,
hiding in the ruins. Put them in carts,
covered them, pushed past guards,
our eyes straight ahead beyond ghetto
walls, out of starvation to the other side.
Christians, Socialists, Jews. Only a few
joined us to help. We called it Council
for Aid to Jews. Finally just *Zegota.*
Money by courier. Medicine, forged
papers parachuted like manna from heaven.
Feeding, saving anyone we could.
We, too, were betrayed, sent to Auschwitz;

the others shot. We tried to return.
Our country did not want us. Threats.
Interrogations. Forced into a life in exile.
Finally, a place for us. *Yadvashem.* Trees—
carob, pine, olive—each leaf a memory.
Light glimmers along a scented path
with our names—Zofia, Wanda, *Zegota.*

Davi Walders developed and directs the Vital Signs Writing Project for patients and families at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, MD and performs her Jewish-themed work nationally.

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Tallit & Gender

Men's *tallesim*—rectangular mantles that look like blankets and probably derive from the *abbayah* still worn by Bedouin for protection against the weather—have remained virtually unchanged for over 2500 years, but give women a tallis—as we have, of course, for only one or two decades—and they quickly evolve into true biblical coats of many colors, the apogee of *hiddur mitzvah,* the religious injunction to beautify and glorify God's commandments.

We at Lilith have seen tallesim [in modern Hebrew, *tallitot*] that burst with creative revolution: some tell stories (through appliques, for example, that are sewn on as one's children grow), some speak to relationships from the past (a swatch from Grandma's wedding dress, for example), some are lovingly hand-embroidered, tatted or woven—an expression of spiritually ennobling women's traditionally devalued skills of handwork. Women understand that clothing is a language, and that a prayer shawl can be an object of desire.

How have you felt as a woman wearing this garment? For an upcoming article about women's tallesim, we'd love to hear about *yours* (or that of your mother, friend, daughter). E-mail us at info@Lilith.org or write to Tallit Stories, LILITH, Suite 2432, 250 W. 57 St., New York NY 10107.

It has been 60 years since the liberation of the camps in Europe, 60 years since the unspeakable evil of the Holocaust has seared into consciousness. And though often labeled unspeakable, survivors and their families have spoken and written about the carnage and its aftershocks in their lives and memories. They write and speak as a moral obligation and a personal necessity. Eva Hoffman is one whose writing probes the Holocaust's effects on her own life, as the child of survivors. Here she introduces her most recent book, *After Such Knowledge*.

When (If Ever) Do We Relinquish Memory?

by Eva Hoffman

In the beginning was the war. That was my childhood. That was my childhood theory of origins, akin perhaps to certain childhood theories of sexuality. For me, the world as I knew it and the people in it emerged not from the womb, but from war. The theory was perhaps understandable, for I was born in Poland, in 1945, that is, on the site of the Second World War's greatest ravages; and so soon after the cataclysm as to conflate it with the cause of my own birth.

Even in Cracow, where I grew up and which had escaped physical destruction, traces of war were everywhere visible: in the injured bodies of war veterans; in the orphaned children I met on our street, and whose condition seemed to me the most pitiable; in the pervasive presence and consciousness of death. Everyone I knew had lost relatives, intimates, friends. My parents lost their entire families: their own parents, sisters, brothers, cousins, uncles, and aunts. On the Jewish high holidays, when our small family went to one of Cracow's old synagogues, we met a community in mourning. The facts of death were so ubiquitous that they seemed both to precede and to supersede the facts of life.

When I was about five, my father took me to Warsaw, a city still lying largely in ruins. We walked along stretches of smooth pavement, but all around us there was stony rubble and skeletal scaffoldings. Metal columns stuck through jagged remains of walls. Window frames gaped, revealing rooms cut in half and filled with debris. Sometimes, the pavement along which we walked gave out as well, and my father and I stumbled as we picked our way across rubble-covered streets. The greyness, the mounds and crumbling hillocks of stone, had an almost lyrical picturesqueness; but the scene was also profoundly, piercingly sad.

Along with the Renaissance architecture of Cracow and the flowering meadows and forests of the Polish countryside, the ruined cities were part of my primal landscape—as, through films and photographs, they became part of my generation's primal iconography. Some of us grew up in or near ruined cities, some of us knew them only through tale and imagery. But all of us born in those first years came into a torn, ravaged world. It is no wonder that so many postwar artists have found fascination in abandoned sites, decayed structures, rust, rubble, peeling paint; the signs and traces of destruction. And it is no wonder that so many have been tempted to see in such subjects a kind of melancholy beauty.

War penetrated the very fabric of my childhood. It interwove itself into other, more sunny sensations with a somber poetry of its own. But it was also the heavy ground of being, the natural condition to which the world tended, and could at any moment revert. Everything else was a precarious aftermath, or maybe an interregnum. In retrospect, I can see that I spent much of my childhood waiting for the war. Waiting for it to manifest itself again, to emerge from where it lurked with its violent, ravaging claws. Waiting for danger and destruction, which were the fundamental human condition, to trample the fragile coverlet of peace. I kept anticipating, with a fearful anxiety I took as normal, the death of my parents. After all, every one of the adults who had once formed our family group, and to whom my parents so often referred, was dead. Life itself, for children born into families like mine, could seem a tenuous condition, a buffeted island in the infinite ocean of death. The Holocaust was not yet distinguished from "war" in anyone's mind; but the intimations of mortality that followed from it were part of my earliest perceptions of the world as I transformed the felt traces of a historical event into a kind of story about the basic elements and shape of the world, a childish mythos or fable.

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1-888-2 LILITH

Born in Poland to Jewish parents who survived the Holocaust, **Eva Hoffman** is the author of *Lost in Translation*, *Shtetl*, and *Exit into History*. Her most recent book, *After Such Knowledge*, deals with the second generation—children of Holocaust survivors—and how they inherit their parents' Holocaust memories and experiences. Hoffman, in honor of Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) at the Taube Center for Jewish Life at the Jewish Community Center in San Francisco, spoke by phone to **Carolyn Slutsky**, an American journalist now living in Crakow, Poland.

How do you think about the connection between Jewish identity and the Holocaust today?

EH: It's a terribly complex issue. We've gone through a period of fixation on the Holocaust, all on the notion of remembering. I think that carries some risks because we can substitute ritual gestures and formulae of remembrance for really thinking about the Holocaust. There are certain dangers. I think the Holocaust has been this enormous history-altering event, but it can't be a foundation for identity. We are at an increasing distance from the Holocaust, so how do we think about it now, 60 years later? In a sense we mustn't deceive ourselves that we're in the direct lineage of this event and that we don't have to make efforts to understand it. We don't receive it as an inheritance; we need to make the effort. After a period of latency and obliviousness, the consciousness of the Holocaust and efforts to honor it have been very important, a solace to survivors who felt their experiences had been greeted with indifference in earlier decades. All together we need to process our relationship to this event, which has changed history and Jewish history, and which continues in the suffering of its victims.

Initially there was this period when in broader public consciousness it was an unspoken subject. Of course the way that it's been considered has differed from country to country. In Poland, issues of public consciousness have been possible only since '89; elsewhere there was a tremendous shift from public silence to public awareness and vicarious fascination. The public consciousness has been important, we need to recognize it's important for the victims to have recognition of the atrocities. The only thing I have more ambivalent feelings about is this kind of false relationship with the Holocaust we have, a sense of moral entitlement.

Is there a different way men and women deal with memory, specifically Holocaust memory?

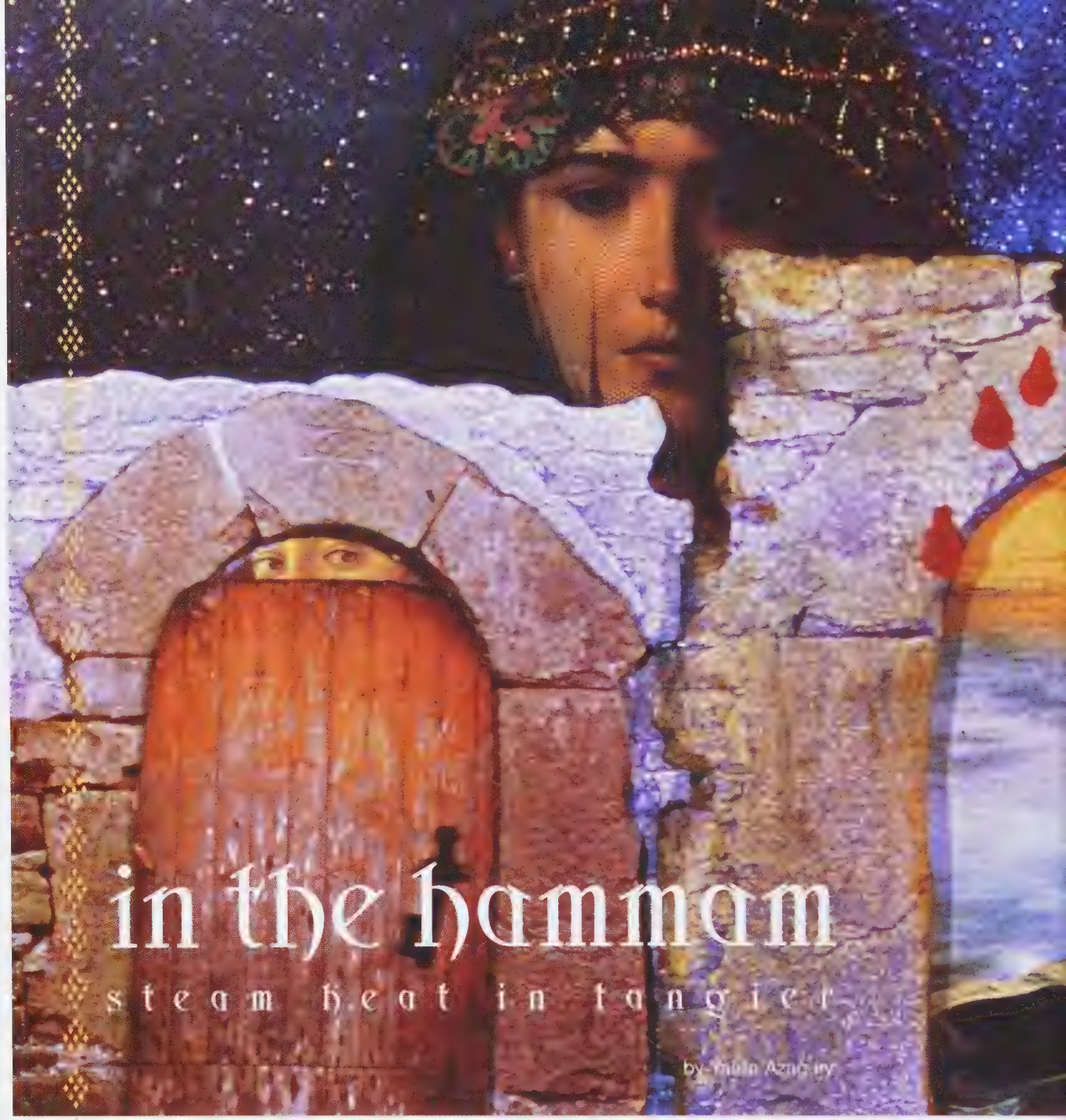
My first intuition is to say no, there isn't. In my family there was a division which may have been seen as a gender division: my mother remembered the moments of great suffering, my father remembered the moments of great adventure, when he was escaping the Germans, which he did brilliantly. Perhaps there are more daughters who remain in a very close, protective relationship with their parents, though I've known men like that as well. Women have a sense of personal obligation and solacing their parents, [being responsible for] their parents' well-being.

You speak of women's obligations. Do you see yourself as a *woman* writer?

The short answer is no. In a sense I'm a good example of how identities are not writ in stone. I started by writing about immigration, and that was my main identity, that was the problem of my life. I came to questions of Jewishness, which were very powerful, later, and I've come to questions of gender later still. Different problems were [in the foreground] at different times; you write out of what nags at you, out of what was a problem.

You have written about different aspects of your own life in each book. How did you choose what to reflect on in this one?

I was combining a chronology of the second generation with more abstract issues. This last book was very difficult to structure, because I was combining a thread of personal narrative—which I felt I needed to show the more subjective processes involved in all this—with a broader historical context. At some point the writing starts talking back to you.



in the hammam

steam heat in tangier

by Hiba Azadiry

It was my first time. It had taken me thirty-three years, but finally, here I am: almost naked except for my underwear, which every woman keeps on as she enters the *hammam*. I felt awkward, and guilty, like a transgressor, and so did my mother, as if we were carrying centuries of taboos on our backs.

A dead cockroach, on the floor of this public bath for women in the kind of narrow vestibule where we got undressed, gave us a first pretext to hesitate. But my mother's friends assured us that the place, although a modest neighborhood hammam in Dradeb, a rather not very opulent part of town, was clean. I believed her, knowing she was right: a cockroach in Tangier, Morocco, was not like a cockroach in New York. Besides, intense heat is often propitious for such insects. Nothing unusual, then. I proceeded, decisively this time. Yet I couldn't help feeling like a young virgin ready to be sacrificed on the altar: Iphigenia at Aulis given as an offering to the gods for the sake of the Greek fleet before the Trojan War.

We first went through a kind of antechamber where the heat is less intense than in the second room, allowing us to get used to the steam rising from the floor. Outside, it was one of those glorious August days where the quality of the air is light and joyous, as if all impurities had been washed away by the *sharqi*, a very strong East wind, Tangier's distinctive mark in the summer. It was Friday, the day when most Muslims go to the hammam because it's their Sabbath, and the voices of the muezzins in the loudspeakers echoed one another, one starting its

LAST NIGHT IN EGYPT, CONCEPT BY CHRIS COZEN AND SALLY MARKELL, COLLAGE BY SALLY MARKELL

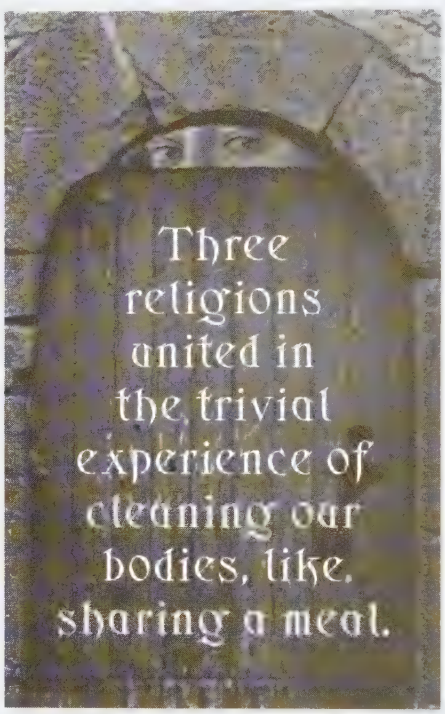
chanting when the other ended it, from all the mosques across town, like an Olympic flame being passed from runner to runner. *Allahou Akbar, Ashhadou Anah Mohammada Rasoulou*....I know the notes by heart. I know, also, I'd better be careful: in Islam, speaking these words automatically makes you a Muslim... Tangier's biggest mosque towers above my parents' house, thus my familiarity with every inflexion of the prayer: sometimes, when I was a little girl—and still now when I visit my family—the pervasive melody drew me from my sleep at 3 or 4 in the morning, time for the first prayer of the day.

Inside, the hammam was dark, spare and Spartan. A stark contrast with the effervescence of the streets. I felt as if I were entering a cavern. The walls of the steam rooms are customarily made from Hajar Habash, a black stone which holds the heat for a long time, heightening the sense of inwardness, and no sound from the outside reached me. A strange indifference reigned in this intimate space, as if nothing really mattered except for the heat rising from the floor and relaxing our muscles. Water smothered noises and voices. I was cut off from the world, like in a womb.

My mother, who has lived all her life in Morocco and would be heartbroken if she had to leave her beloved country, had never been in a hammam, because, as she put it, the heat was so intense she was afraid of passing out. One of my mother's close friends, Jewish like us, had the same fear. Jewish women went to the mikveh, of course, not to the hammam. Hence,

my mother and I felt like true pioneers, as though we were unlocking new dimensions of the hatred between Jews and Muslims; hence also my guilt, of the kind a deserter from the Soviet Union going West would feel. For I was crossing to the other side, the side of the majority, and I, the Jewish girl, was the minority. East and West reversed…

Soon realizing that our hearts were unaffected by the high temperatures, we proceeded to the second room under the firm guidance of Rabea, my mother's Muslim friend, and Latifa, her sister. Rabea is married to Toni, a Spaniard who converted to Islam, a necessary step in order to become her husband. Although her story suggests her wariness towards religious orthodoxy—marrying outside of one's religion is unusual for a woman in Morocco, though less so for a man since Islam, unlike Judaism, transmits religious identity through the father—Rabea is a devout Muslim. She does her prayers every day, fasts on Ramadan, and holds to her beliefs with a measured yet determined passion. In one of those mysterious and beautiful twists of destiny, Rabea is my mother's closest friend, elective affinities for once successfully triumphing over blood allegiances. Latifa, strangely enough, also married a *Roumi*, the word for Christian in Arabic. She did so when she was 35, an unlikely age for a traditional Moroccan woman, after leaving Morocco and trying her luck as an emancipated woman making her own destiny in the West. Also that day Latifa's daughter was with us. Sarah, eight years old, is a beautiful child with deep Oriental eyes from her mother and almost translucent skin from her Irish father. I couldn't help meditating on her name, at the crossroads of cultures, equally used by Jews, Muslims and Christians.



The five of us were almost entirely naked, three religions united in the trivial experience of cleaning our bodies, like sharing a meal. Nudity was dazzling and natural at the same time. Latifa and Rabea had beautiful bodies, with full breasts and silky olive skin. I, on the other hand, felt awkward. I didn't know the gestures and the ritual. A clumsy outsider, I was just standing there as if I was watching a movie in a foreign language. But the awkwardness didn't just come from missing that understanding. Suddenly I knew: Jews and Arabs were sharing the proximity of their naked, defenseless bodies. The tension came from the sensuality of that kind of closeness. Jews and Arabs had been coexisting in Morocco for centuries without a sensual bond. It was dangerous to feel too close. Keeping that distance was the only way to avoid mixing with the enemy and thus keeping our distinct identities.

In the second room, Mennana and Fatima, two *hammamis* (women from the hammam who clean and exfoliate you) brought us two huge buckets filled with hot water. With small copper dippers, I poured it on myself. I was then given a dark soap, called *biladi*, a kind of paste I used to scrub off "the first layer of dirt." I didn't feel the heat, just the pleasant touch of hot water on my skin. A softness was settling in. After that, Mennana, who was about 60, told me to lie on my stomach. She started giving me the best massage one could ever dream of at the fanciest spa in New York, rubbing every single part of my body, from toes to elbows. She was amazed I could speak Arabic. She thought I was a *Roumi*, and I didn't say I was Jewish… Did I feel it was a stigma to be a Jew? Letting her think I was Christian seemed somehow less complicated. Of course, my silence spoke for centuries of tumultuous coexistence between Jews and Arabs in Morocco, with alternating cycles of peace and violence. Depending on the will of the ruling Sultan, Jews would be tolerated as *dhimmis* (a recognized legal minority status for religions of the Book) with special royal protection, while being used as scapegoats in precarious times. I chased those thoughts away and washed myself with cooler water. I couldn't stop pouring buckets on my body. I felt renewed. We were all relaxed, sharing shampoos and beauty products. I got dressed with the only *jellaba*, the traditional Moroccan dress worn by women, that I own. I also covered my hair with a scarf, Muslim-style. For the first time in my life, I thought I could have been Muslim.

In Jewish Moroccan folklore, there is a tale of transgression I have always found haunting not just because I bear the name of its main protagonist. It's the true story of a young Jewish girl in Tangier in 1832. She was called Sol Hachuel (my own full name is Sol Yaelle) and her tomb in Fez is still visited by Jews around the world. Sol, sun in Spanish, was a typical female Jewish name in Morocco, in a community still deeply steeped in its Spanish roots which trace back to the expulsion from Spain during the Inquisition. At home, our native language was Spanish, not Arabic, or rather Judeo-Spanish also called *Haketia*. (*Haketia* is the vernacular of Jews of Spanish origin in parts of North Africa. Often confused with *Ladino* or *Judezmo*, the language of Sephardic Jews settled in East Mediterranean countries, *Haketia* has Spanish, Arabic and Hebrew influences. In Northern Morocco, Sephardic Jews often enjoy using it as a vehicle for humor, self-deprecation and feelings of closeness, as Ashkenazi Jews use Yiddish.) The story reads like an Oriental Cinderella: barely 17, Sol is a young-girl-of-great-beauty-who-was-mistreated-by-her-evil-stepmother. One day while she is mopping the floor, her Muslim neighbor Tahra invites her to her house, cajoling her with words and sweets. Tahra, who wants Sol to marry her son, convinces Sol to proffer the *Shahada*, the sacred formula needed to convert to Islam. Here the versions diverge. In one of them, Sol agrees in a moment of weakness. Later regretting and recanting her conversion, Sol tries to reject the Muslim faith,

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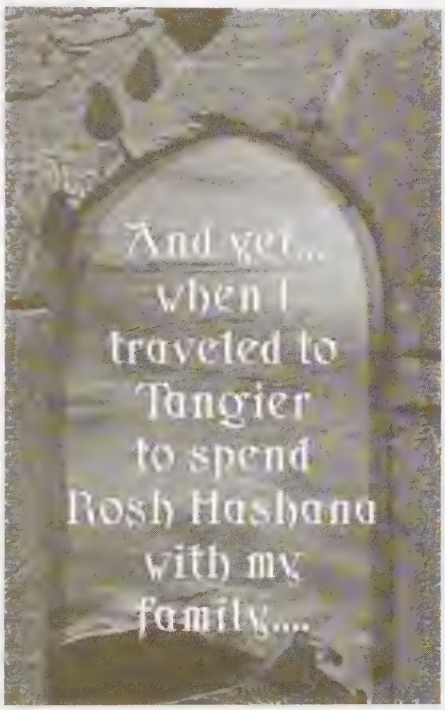
but Tahra gets angry and goes to the Qadi (local judge) to denounce Sol: one is not allowed to renounce Islam. In another version, Sol obstinately refuses conversion, but Tahra spreads the rumor that she has already pronounced the words that make her a Muslim. Tahra's words prevail....Sol is a Muslim in the eyes of the law. Because she won't recognize this, Sol is decapitated. In another retelling, she falls in love with her Muslim neighbor Taleb and converts, regretting it later.

The many versions of this story prove the fascination it has always held for the tellers of Jewish folktales. It is a cautionary tale about the enticements and fatalities of crossing religious borders, perhaps a rewriting of the Persephone and Hades myth. Like Persephone, Solika crosses the line to the other world—Persephone is taken to the Underworld (it is unclear whether it is voluntarily or not, exactly like in the Solika story) and after Hades makes her taste a pomegranate, she cannot return to her mother Demeter. Both stories are about the need to separate from the mother tongue to find one's own path in life. But unlike Persephone, who eventually spends two-thirds of the year with her husband, Hades, and one third with her mother, Solika's fate doesn't allow for the luxury of compromise. But how could there be a compromise? It must be either Islam or Judaism.



Have things changed since Solika's time? Surely, Morocco has been more protective of its Jews than any other Muslim country. Not only under King Mohammed V, who guarded Jews from Vichy rule during World War II, but also under King Hassan II, who was sincerely mourned by all Moroccan Jews. Since the terrorists attacks of May 16, 2004, in Casablanca, a nationwide campaign against terrorism has been launched by the new king, Mohammed VI, with the slogan: "*Ne touche pas à mon pays*" ("Stay away from my country"), a subtle echo of an anti-racist campaign launched in France by SOS Racisme, an anti-racist organization, in the 80's—their slogan was: "*Ne touche pas à mon pote*" ("Leave my buddy alone"). Of course, the subliminal message is that attacking Jews is also an attack on Morocco. Since these attacks, Moroccan police have cracked down on Islamist extremists, especially in Tangier, a center for political Islamists in Morocco.

And yet...late in September two years ago, I traveled to Tangier to spend Rosh Hashanah with my family. I usually go there in the summer, and with the influx of T.M.E ("Travailleurs Marocains à L'Etranger"), as they are called, or Moroccan emigrant workers coming back from Belgium, France or Germany to spend their vacations and their euros in their native country, the urban landscape looks familiar to a Westerner: fancy European cars, women wearing mini-skirts and tight pants, a colorful and cheerful crowd having fun until late at night; overall, a relaxed atmosphere. But now, the vacationers were gone, and a less adulterated, more authentic picture emerged. Things had changed. More than half of the women on the streets were covered, either wearing the traditional jellaba or the new outfit imported from the Middle East for more modern religious women: loose pants with a long matching tunic and a scarf tied in the back to cover the hair. Occasionally, I saw women entirely covered in floating black *niqabs*, something I never saw when I was growing up.

One day, my mother and I went to a store selling *caftans* (traditional Moroccan dress for women), where my mother is a regular, and we were welcomed by two men enthralled by the sounds of Koranic chanting from a radio. It kept going as we were looking at the different fabrics. My mother has been going there for years, so they knew we were Jewish. All of a sudden, my wandering eye fell on a photocopied piece of paper under the glass counter: it was a leaflet calling in Arabic for a boycott of American products—Coca-Cola, McDonald's, Levi's—and a crossed Magen David. I felt increasingly uncomfortable and told my mother I couldn't find anything I liked. When I told her what I had seen, she replied in her usual optimistic manner that the same two guys would probably be sipping a Coke at the corner café right after closing time. I protested; she was blind to the true nature of her environment. A few weeks earlier, two Jews had been killed: one, on the anniversary of September 11 in 2003, was stabbed in Meknes (140 km east of Rabat) on his way to the synagogue, while the other one was shot in Casablanca two days earlier. Extremist imams have been preaching anti-Semitism in the last few years. For instance, Mohamed Fizazi, who publicly declared that "killing a Jew is not a sin."

Moroccan Jews are worried. I asked my mother what further proof she needed to see that Jews were not welcome here anymore. But in fact, the real question was rather about the threshold of tolerance: since Solika's times, that threshold had been subtly adjusted, making things at times better or worse for Jews. But were Moroccan Jews ever fully Moroccan? Did they feel that this was their country? My mother gave an enigmatic answer: "Sweetheart, have you ever heard of unrequited love?"

Yaëlle Azagury teaches French Literature at Barnard College. She grew up in Tangier, Morocco, where her family—descendants from Spanish Jews who came to Morocco in the 16th Century, after the Inquisition—still lives among a Muslim population. Although the Jewish community in Morocco was once one of the most important in the Arab world, now Moroccan Jews, one of the last Jewish populations living in a Muslim country, number no more than 3,000. The majority live in Casablanca, and only about 100 in Tangier. She goes back to Tangier often to visit her parents and, most recently, for her wedding in June to an American.

Severance Pay

a short story by Marti Zuckrowv

Alfalfa lost his one-city-block kingdom the day after my husband lost his job. Overnight, both of them turned into permanent fixtures on my striped living room couch. The couch before was floral, and the one before that, green. Every two years or so, after the boys had clawed the life out of a couch—forget scratching posts—we hit the thrift stores and bought a new couch. When we'd had a truck, getting it home was a cinch, but when the kids' car died, we gave them the truck. My son-in-law was in construction and my daughter, seven months pregnant with her third child, was trying to finish up an AA degree as a paralegal. We bought a tough little hatchback from a neighbor, which, two rebuilt engines later, I still have. I paid 30 bucks to have my striped couch delivered, 60 bucks less than the couch itself, but I figured with the senior discount they gave me, I could do it and let it go. I am not one to let things go easily.

When Alfalfa lost his kingdom he also lost one third of his ear. Because my husband was home in front of the TV, chain smoking and trying to make heads or tails about being laid off, he heard the fight. I was in the shower running an auburn rinse through my graying hair. I pride myself on my thick long hair, although in the down there department, another story altogether. That department in general has gotten less and less attention over the years. The unexpected lay-off didn't help.

Until the stray showed up, Alfalfa strutted up and down our block like royalty. His brother, Oats, knew better than to challenge Alfalfa's sovereignty outdoors, although once inside he could and would whup Alfalfa's feline butt when the mood struck. This was no mangy stray. This was a muscular, short haired calico Tom who looked like he could hold his own with a mountain lion. Sure, looks can be deceiving, but in this case, no.

Now you take my husband for instance; in the uniform he'd worn for close to twenty years, the big, baggy overalls with all those pockets for every kind of gadget, you'd never know he was solid muscle, the kind of muscle you get from lugging things around from place to place, from loading trucks with heavy boxes of this or that. A loyal employee he was, even with all the goings on at the plant. His last supervisor, the one who fired him, was half my husband's age, and a snotty kid to boot. Thought his fancy college degree gave him the right to scream at holler at the guys, then expect them to be buddy buddy at the end of the day. We lucked out with the ear, no vet bill. Just a lopsided ear. On a good day, souffles or pates or other such fancy-ass dishes flashed across the TV screen. Game shows were worse. The Loony Tunes my husband found by surfing the networks were the hardest on me. Even as a girl, cartoons upset me. Comic books too, except for Little Lulu. Always did have a soft spot for Little Lulu and how she and Tubby stayed such good friends.

Curled up on my husband's lap, Alfalfa purred his motor-like purr while riding the waves of his owner's nicotine breath. Those cigarettes cost. Don't get me wrong, I light one up once in a while, and can't say I don't enjoy it. But the severance pay would only go so far. Unemployment checks would take a while before they started rolling in. I cleaned around them, stooping down while I swept peanut shells, candy wrappers, ashes, and cat hair into my dustpan. Vacuuming upset the dynamic duo, but it needed to be done. Oats, who had been forever draped over the back of my easy chair before Alfalfa's fall, took to slipping in and out of the cat door. Before long, he and the stray, who one day showed up with a flea collar, were lounging on our stoop, soaking up the afternoon sun. Alfalfa crept out to do his business.

My husband, when he wasn't caught up in a show, made numerous trips to the kitchen. His grazing did little for my

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At first, we did okay when the unemployment kicked in. But then my husband—who didn't take his medicine—got serious about his cooking shows.

never-ending weight-loss plan, not that he ever complained about the 20 pounds I couldn't seem to shed. Used to be a string bean, before my son. Never did get over holding his tiny, perfectly formed body. "Terrible things happen," the doctor told me after I'd opened my eyes in the recovery room. I had a foggy memory of something going very, very wrong in the labor room. The pain was gone and slowly my eyes focused on the unfamiliar face of a doctor I had never seen, which was not really anything at first because you got whoever, but something about the way he was leaning over me too close like we were old friends bothered me, and I shouted at him, "I want to see my baby. Where's my baby?"

Days turned to weeks before the unemployment kicked in. At first, combined with the tail end of the severance pay we did OK. But then my husband got serious about his cooking shows. He took to scribbling down recipes and trying them out when he could tear himself away from the tube long enough to drive down to the organic something or other supermarket cross town, pay triple what he'd have paid at Safeway and stand over my stove whipping and stirring and leaving me one hell of a mess. All of a sudden leeks and Portabello mushrooms and prosciuto were showing up in my fridge. And, overdrawn on the bank statement. Now, I gotta tell you, we'd been there before.

If my husband didn't take his medicine it could happen. Or, the other, the dead sleep I named it, whenever I'd had to yell and scream and just about yank his 180 pounds out of the bed. If you ask me, I think that's why my boy died. The nine months I carried him, that dead sleep did me in, working myself up so he'd make it to the job.

Three months into the unemployment, I demanded the couch, and the tube, between 12 and two, for my stories. Next thing I know, my husband goes out and buys himself some kind of a chef's outfit: apron, hat, the whole bit. He takes to hunching over my stove while my soaps are on, fussing over his concoctions and wrecking my kitchen.

Alfalfa would curl up next to me and purr away. Occasionally he'd lift his furry little head and sniff the untouched carrot and celery sticks I'd set out for myself. I tried to be good, I really did, but creamed this and sautéed that won out, hands up. "Don't do it," a voice went off in my head, but eating something that actually tasted like something instead of the crap I tried to convince myself I liked, well, it goes without saying. OK, you get the picture. I'm getting fatter and he's getting crazier. I'm having one hell of a time eating and blaming him. He's whipping up things with cheese and chocolates and he's getting kind of loud in the kitchen and once in a while a little mean, not to me, never to me, but ignoring the boys when they want water.

He can't sleep at night so he wanders around. I hear him pacing thud thud thud and I remember all the times like this. By now I know his route and when his foot will hit the floor. He's taking a shower at 2:00 A.M. then he's in the living room with the tube blasting some kind of old movie. I hear snatches of conversations, chords of music, even with the bedroom door shut. He's getting thinner by the minute so it's like Jack Sprat and his wife, and I know I don't want to do this again. I am so so tired. It's not like I'm 21.

Sorry, didn't mean to go off like that. But see, I couldn't really blame him, I figured he was doing the best he could while we were waiting for the Welfare to come through with medical. Damn good plan we had before all the crap started. And don't get me started on that welfare. Must have been two hours a day I tried getting through to a human being. Press 1 or 2 or 3, hell, call me The Queen of Caffeine for all the cups I downed, sitting at the kitchen table with the phone perched on my shoulder, my neck seizing up now and again. I'm clipping a cuticle or trying out a new red, ready to write down who the hell it was I can talk to directly and get his medicine covered. He doesn't eat, times like this, or sleep, but I already told you that. Me, I lay in the bed a lot, drifting off here and there.

Sure, they told me after the funeral, the mousy social worker from the hospital, the rabbi they sent me thinking he'd do me some good. "Life goes on. God works in mysterious ways," said that tall skinny man-child barely old enough to vote. A goddamned Adam's apple like he swallowed a golf ball and he's patting my shoulder with his long white fingers. I remember them being very long, I remember my son's tiny cold hand in mine, tearing me up inside, and I remember the trickle of blood sliding down my thigh, that horse-size pad between my legs, my insides torn up he was close to eight pounds. "Don't tell me about your God," I scream back at him, everything cracking: my voice, my heart, my will to live. I got around it, I did. Kept busy. Never worked. My husband's pride forbade it, but I found things to do. Never was big on friends, but I had one or two good ones killed the day together, the kids off running around the playground, chasing squirrels, climbing monkey bars, screaming for the ice cream man. I did OK. Had a few setbacks but I pulled myself together when I had to get Sue off in the morning or pick her up in the afternoon. That was the only time I let my housework go. You could have eaten off my floor, except for then.

I reach for the phone next to the bed when it rings. My husband is frying up fish and I know there's oil splattered all over my stove and the wall behind it which no matter what I use, never gets clean. It's the welfare worker. Should be authorized by next week. "What about my husband's pills?" I hear myself screaming. "Call back Wednesday," a flat voice says back to me.

It's Friday. We can't wait. Alfalfa leaps onto the bed, fussily inserts himself in the crook of my arm and licks his paws. I envy his small, contained life; he eats, he shits, he lives with two cat lovers. Well, for now make that one. The man at the stove seems to be having a conversation with The Man Upstairs. Comes with the territory.

"I cook fish on Friday," he's telling his imaginary friend, "for your Christ you say we killed." I hear the oven door slam shut and know some kind of doughy, buttery, popover thing got shoved inside and that it will come out gorgeous and golden with 3000 calories in each one and that I will sink my teeth into two or three or four of them, then hate myself more than I already do.

He's at the sink, he's washing the company plates, we're having another one of his Friday night whacky Christ/Shabbats. He's digging through the miscellaneous drawer in the kitchen. "*Benchin Licht*," he calls it, "you light the candles, you, the wife has to do it, you cover your head, you say a prayer, you give thanks." Figure I can do this one more time. It means so much to him, and it calms him down for a hot second. Also, I die for his fried trout. I swing my legs over the side of the mattress. Alfalfa pounces onto the little green shag rug and trots off, offended. Avoiding the mirror, I zip up the black, size 16 skirt I can still manage to fit into. A silky overblouse works wonders for my nonexistent waistline. A spritz of this, a spritz of that, I make myself presentable.

The boys are on the couch, grooming each other. My husband is decked out in the navy suit he wore to my daughter's wedding, gold cufflinks and all. He's still a looker, I gotta give him that. The remote in one hand, a bottle of who-knows-what-these-days in the other, he clicks off the tube, his sacrifice for whatever it is his nutty brain tells him is the right thing to do in honor of the Sabbath. Mind you, this is a man who never sets foot in a synagogue. At least he manages that no one but the family has the pleasure of seeing his crazy business. I give him that. I have to admit, with the lacy tablecloth dressing up my kitchen table, the silver candleholder I'm sure cost him an arm and a leg (I stopped asking since it only makes things worse when he gets like this) and the good dishes set out beside linen napkins I didn't remember I had, the place looks good. He shoves a kerchief at me. I tie it around my neck, Babushka style. This gets a huge grin from my husband, who is at work dressing a salad. Blue cheese, wouldn't you know.

"Blessed art thou our Lord of the universe who brings us forth bread from the earth," I mumble what I remember of the prayer my daughter learned at sleepaway camp the summer after my son died. On second try, I strike a match against the box and light the candles. Four bright ribbons of fire appear. Everything is delicious. Fried trout melts in my mouth, the popovers are irresistible. My husband reaches across the table and takes my hand in his. I hold onto his large familiar hand, and to him. I need him to stay with me. I need my best friend back. We wait. ●

Marti Zuchrowv is a first generation Red Diaper Baby who spoke Yiddish before she spoke English. Her father was the business editor for the Morning Freiheit, a left-wing Jewish newspaper, and her mother was a garment worker and a union organizer for the ILGWU. She teaches dance, movement, and runs therapeutic exercise classes. She says she writes about what she cares about: "relationships, families and the ways we survive them."

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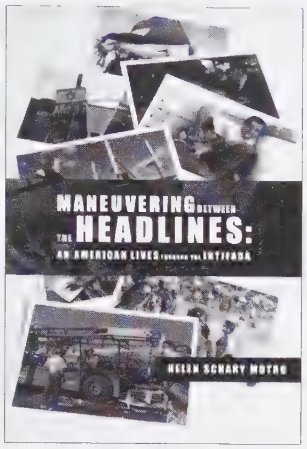

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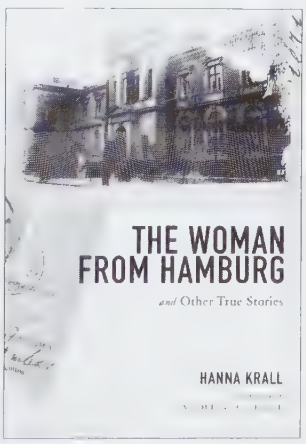

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JAP

Reclaim Her or Reject Her?

by Alana Newhouse

Last year, I inadvertently came out of the closet.

No, not that closet. Mine, I suppose, was a closet full of the best clothes and the most gorgeous shoes. I had outed myself as a Jewish American Princess.

It was in an interview given for a book on Jewish journalism. The discussion ranged from the relevance of the Jewish laws to news reporting, to the current state of Jewish fiction, to reconciling ideas of art and Jewish law in the Orthodox community. But, judging from the feedback I received, what sparked the most interest was a series of questions about my personal background. As I explained, I grew up in a modern Orthodox community, attended yeshiva through 12th grade, and at one time or another have exhibited many of the traditional accoutrements of the stereotypical girl from Long Island's "Five Towns": great clothes, even better shoes, nose job at 16, dark curls blown straight weekly.

"I grew up in Lawrence," I was quoted as saying. "To this day, I can do a better French manicure than any French manicurist you can get in Manhattan. I can put lipliner on in a dark cab. . . . I'm a well-honed JAP."

More than a year later, I'm still not sure why I made this comment on the record (and yes, I wince when I read it now). I certainly didn't mean it to present the full picture of me; in addition to my sartorial interests, I have avid intellectual, emotional and psychological ones. Perhaps, I wondered soon after the interview was published, I thought it might round me out, make me seem edgier or hipper than just some nerdy girl toiling away in the office of a Jewish newspaper.

Whatever I was angling for, I did not expect the rather fierce criticism I received in response, from both women and men whom I held in great regard. (There weren't many of them; as someone joked, this book about Jewish journalists would likely have the same number of readers as interviewees.) At 29, I have been for some time, and hope to remain, a proud feminist—not post-feminist or proto-feminist or paleo-feminist or what have you—as well as a very proud Jew, one so insatiably curious about her religion and culture that she devoted her professional life to it. Yet, according to some, I had just identified myself with one of the most misogynist, anti-Semitic slurs in modern history.

So why did it feel so right?

Over the past year, I began hearing the term used more and more. I received galleys for a book titled *The JAP Chronicles*, a novel by Isabel Rose out in May from Doubleday; Rachel Factor, a Japanese-American actress who converted to Judaism, began touring the country with a one-women show titled "J.A.P."; I read that the Style Network was casting for a show called "JAP Squad," for which an executive sent out an e-mail looking for "girls who know where to go in NYC for the best deals, who know the nail salons, the bakeries, the spas, the nice places, too." Perhaps even more interestingly, a slew of new novels were guided by Jewish female protagonists evincing equally strong strains of intellectualism and material interests; one, in Julius Lester's excellent *The Autobiography of God*, is even described as "first-generation American, child of Holocaust survivors; fluency in Yiddish, Polish, Hebrew, Aramaic; ordained rabbi, therapist, and beneath it all, the soul of an editor at Vogue."

Clearly something was going on—after years of taboo, consumerism was once again being connected with Jewish identity—and, in this trend, I was no mere observer.

As readers of this magazine well know, the term "Jewish American Princess" emerged in post-World War II America (though, as Riv-Ellen Prell argues persuasively in *Fighting to Become Americans: Assimilation and the Trouble Between Jewish Women and Jewish Men*, the basic stereotype has existed, under different names, for more than a century). Usually portrayed as the daughter of an upwardly mobile, doting immigrant father, the Jewish American Princess—embodied prominently by Herman Wouk's "Marjorie Morningstar" and Brenda Patimkin in Philip Roth's "Goodbye Columbus"—was on the receiving end of the best in life. And, like all stereotypes, she embodied a variety of contradictory traits, all negative—shallow yet supremely powerful, sexually

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I'd come to think of myself as sensually complicated, a woman who enjoyed intellectual pursuits as much as material ones.

frigid yet knowledgeable enough to use sex as a tool of manipulation, stupid yet cunning enough to always get her way.

Feminists, including those associated with this magazine, waged battles against the JAP stereotype for years, but its Waterloo appears to have come in 1987, with the emergence of a fierce strain of JAP-baiting on college campuses. The examples ranged from offensive—graffiti, "Slap a Jap" T-shirts, anti-JAP rap song lyrics—to the downright frightening, including housing ads warning "No JAPS" and one particularly vicious newspaper cartoon that advised readers to exterminate the JAPS by "setting up trucks offering bargains, collecting the JAPS as they scurried in, and dropping them over a cliff."

"[Ten years ago,] we optimistically believed that the changing reality of Jewish women's lives would consign these negative images to the garbage can of history," read an editorial in

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this magazine's famed fall 1987 issue on the topic. "Instead, what has happened is the opposite: they have gotten a new lease on life." Various theories were proposed for the term's resurgence; one of the most convincing was offered by Alan Dundes, the late Berkeley folklorist, who concluded that JAP jokes—which he claimed emerged in earnest in the late 1970s—were likely a reaction to the feminist movement.

The stereotype was connected to a panoply of Jewish communal frights, from undermining the solidarity of the Jewish family and causing a rise in intermarriage to connecting the Jews with the Japanese ("Japs"), America's enemy in World War II and, in the 1980s, a feared economic rival. After a vigorous campaign by activists and communal organizations—which included the formation of an organization to study the portrayal of Jewish women in the media, known as the Morning Star Commission—the term did eventually subside. For a decade or so.

That particular decade—the 1990s—was a formative one for me. It began with my 14th birthday, and took me through my first lipstick, my first boyfriend, one great camp romance, one gold lamé skirt, my first successful piece of writing, my nose job, getting my driver's license, one visit to Auschwitz, two crises of faith, my first days at Barnard, two years of regular visits to Henri Bendel, the beginning of my politics, my first paycheck, my first career and my first pair of Chanel shoes.

I had come to think of myself as admirably complicated, a woman who enjoyedintellectual pursuits as much as material ones, and who had earned the right—and the money—to embrace my materialism. Although I could acknowledge the very good arguments made by Second Wave feminists about the history of the stereotype, they seemed neglectful of a very real sociological phenomenon. I *did* blow my curls straight week after week, I *did* have a nose job, I *did* have a closet full of great shoes, I *was* from Long Island (and still have the accent to prove it).

"But why aren't you just a consumerist then?" Riv-Ellen Prell asked me, during a rather spirited discussion. "What does being Jewish have to do with it?"

I had just identified myself with a terrible slur. So why did it feel so right?

That's just it: My hair was blown straight not for weekdays, but on Fridays before Shabbat and the holidays; the most beautiful clothes were bought for shul, not for Saturday night. A very typical Friday afternoon with friends included lunch at Sabra Pizza and an afternoon of window (and actual) shopping, almost always in preparation for Shabbat. Nor was this ritual limited to girls; Wear Else?, a men's clothing store, was packed with guys trying on one awful-looking Coogi sweater after another, in what now appears to me to have been one of the earliest hot spots of metrosexuality. (In fact, on the issue of clothing, my closest male friend always had me beat—and still does.)

"My identity as a 'Jewish daughter' was entangled with shopping," said artist and critic Rhonda Lieberman, "and infected with the JAP fantasy I'd internalized (and disavowed) about the importance, especially for a woman, of being the kosher-style incarnation of Thorsten Veblen's conspicuous consumer." In Lieberman, I found a kindred spirit, another woman struggling to make sense of a part of her own history that she found at once unattractive and unshakeable.

"I took it as an unwritten 'rule' that my subjectivity as a shopper had to be somehow quarantined from the 'serious' and valid, High-Culture, Art and Thought that would 'redeem' me," she once said in a speech on the topic. "Yet I soon discovered that questioning this taboo was the key to integrating parts of my experience and my self that threatened to cancel each other—and me—out. Not to reconcile them, but to let them coexist, honoring and appeasing each one."

When I asked Lieberman about the process, she referred to it as "a classic structure of integration. You reject certain early parts of your background and then when you're grounded, you can revisit those things and—through choice—decide whether or not you want to reclaim them," she explained.

According to Lieberman, it is perfectly normal to examine a part of one's background and then—as an adult—decide whether to reclaim it or discard it. I agree. But this raises an obvious follow-up question: Why did I choose to reclaim it?

At one point in my discussion with Dundes, he mentioned that among children of immigrants in the postwar period it was popular to tell jokes that required the joke teller to acquire an overwrought Yiddish accent, usually at the punchline. According to some observers, beneath these seemingly harmless jokes ran an unseen rivulet of self-hatred; mimicking the Yiddish accent enabled the joke-teller—whose other sentences were presumably rendered in a normal "American" accent—to differentiate himself from his "foreign" parents. Perhaps this was true of me. Maybe calling myself a JAP, tongue-in-cheek, was a safe way for me to identify with my past while also remaining distant from it.

And maybe that's not a bad thing. For me, this process was never about embracing the stereotype, but about embracing a part of my past that, like it or not, fell under the rubric known as JAPpiness. It may seem reprehensible intellectually, and the words of a weary Francine Klagsbrun repeatedly run through my head: "You think the fights are won. But things get won and then they get lost again." That's just it.

Sometimes, the fights are personal and individual, and there's just no way for women to win those except one at a time.

Alana Newhouse is the arts & culture editor at the Forward newspaper.

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The Shame of the JAP

by Miriam Stone

hen a Jewish woman comes to the table as a community activist in America—whether she wants to get involved with a campus environmental group or her local P.T.A.—certain assumptions precede her. She is white, so she can't possibly understand the struggle of non-white minorities. She is Jewish, so she is probably wealthy and therefore distant from the "people's" struggle. If she wants to be taken seriously, she has to prove that she belongs, or no one will believe her. Trouble is, she probably doesn't believe it herself.

For many twentysomething Jews, growing up like me in more comfortable circumstances than our parents or grandparents, fitting in as activists often translates into hiding our backgrounds. And since Judaism today is associated with wealth, this often means distancing ourselves from Judaism as well. I went to college with a pot-smoking environmental science major who tried to pretend that he grew up in the ghettos of Oakland (rather than the wealthy hills) and would not admit that he was Jewish unless pressed. For him, being Jewish meant being bourgeois, a status he tried to conceal with his dreadlocks and ripped khakis. It was once uncool to be Jewish in America because Jews were poor and struggling. Now it's uncool because they aren't. The relationship between Jews and money is always shifting, and always uncomfortable.

Nowhere is this tenuous relationship more clear than in the popularization of the term JAP, or Jewish American Princess. I myself am guilty of throwing this term around, of substituting it for "sorority chick" or "spoiled brat." However, when I heard myself recently, and stopped to break it down, I realized that the term signifies much more than its common use, it is in its very essence about being Jewish. Although calling someone a WASP—a White, Anglo-Saxon Protestant—has come to connote something similarly negative, the actual words are simply descriptive; they contain no inherent bias. Yet JAP is an entirely different beast, and it all hinges on that last word: Princess. Princess—a daddy's girl, a member of the nouveau riche, an extravagant spender who doesn't deserve it, a member of the upper class who doesn't belong. Thin and well-dressed with pin-straight hair, a JAP carries the look of assimilation. But she can't be completely assimilated—who's ever heard of a *Jewish* princess?

In every way, the word JAP is about Jews trying to fit into a world in which they have historically never belonged. Yet the term has become so internalized that Jews are just about the only ones who use it. At an Upper West Side dinner party I attended with members of my parents' generation, the entire table launched into a diatribe against *them*—JAPs who live on the Upper East Side, those self-absorbed, shopaholic social climbers who are defined by their sense of entitlement. Beneath this sharp hatred lurks the real meaning: "those women" are undeserving. Of course rich and powerful men, self-made or not, don't face the same ridicule and derision when their backs are turned.

But a JAP is only a JAP if she behaves a certain way. A friend of mine who grew up in the suburbs and attended an elite private school in Washington looks the part of a JAP. She wears designer clothes and makeup, her hair perfectly highlighted and blow-dried. When people first meet her, they often write her off as typical sorority chick. But their attitudes change when they learn that she's a graduate student in social work and wants to work with HIV-infected children. Aside from the physical stereotype, the term JAP carries with it a value judgment, a criticism of those who prioritize (or even who *appear* to prioritize) money, self-presentation and social status over making a difference in the world.

I spent my college years ashamed to admit I came from a wealthy suburb.

But what about Jewish women who grew up poor and choose to become power players, lifting their families and themselves from the struggles they faced as children? Though they might be seen as more "deserving" of their wealth and status, they'll likely never be fully accepted or comfortable in the upper echelons of society, given their economic roots, their religion, and the fact that they are women. Jews, like women, aren't supposed to take up a lot of room. We shouldn't be loud or ostentatious, and we shouldn't be in power. As Jews in the U.S. have grown in economic status in this country, so have the evergreen conspiracy theories about Jews controlling the government or the media. And as Jewish women—mothers, daughters, and self-made businesswomen—have settled into wealth, the word JAP has come to life again in our everyday vocabulary, illuminating not only the discomfort of broader society with Jews' new-found status, but also our own.

I never thought it harmful to refer to someone as a JAP, yet I spent many of my college years ashamed to admit that I came from a wealthy suburb, or that I was related to a successful Cleveland family. It is this shame and division that keeps us from coming to the table as equals, as full members of society comfortable with our own positions and ready to take action to lift the bar for everyone. ●

Miriam Stone is the author of *At the End of Words: A Daughter's Memoir* (Candlewick 2003). She lives in Brooklyn.

Philosophers with Wombs, Mothers without Housedresses

by Rebecca Goldstein

Although I was married shockingly young, right after my freshman year of college, I postponed having children for some years. I was moved by large and inexplicable ambitions. No woman I knew had the ambitions I did. The woman's movement was in its toddler phase. In the Orthodox Jewish world in which I'd been raised, we hadn't heard a peep out of it. So where did I get off thinking that I had important things to learn before I could even contemplate duplicating my genes? I have no idea.

I'd always had the thought of motherhood tucked away on my list of to-do's. I loved kids, I more than looked forward to having one or two of my own someday. Yet the pressure to have children right after marriage—so universal in my family's community as to go without saying—was as unwelcome to me as the thought of never having kids at all. I wanted to be a mother, sure, but I didn't want to be a mother who wore housedresses.

The housedress is a garment halfway between a bathrobe and a proper dress. It allows you to change out of your nightclothes without allowing you to leave the house. A woman can respectably answer the door in it, but she can't step out of the door. Sometimes they are called "housecoats," cruelly pouring on the irony: coats that keep you inside.

They are cut like coats, boxy and waistless. In fact, they are the most singularly unsexy garments imaginable, designed perhaps to banish any innuendo of peek-a-boo sensuality hovering around nightgowns, negligees, lingerie. The woman who wears a housedress might not be fully clothed, but she isn't in a bedroom sort of way either.

My mother got up and put on a housedress almost every single day, except of course on the Sabbath, when she got dressed up and went to synagogue. (Dressing up always involved another esoteric garment of those days, the girdle—but that's another essay entirely.) Housedresses were my mother's working uniform, and they always made me feel uneasily sorry for her. They represented a life of terminal drabness, the foreclosure of adventure. To get up and put on something that didn't allow you to tread over your threshold and stride out into the great wide world seemed a renunciation so capacious that it left almost no room for stepping around in.

There was a queasiness that the housedress provoked in me, though I didn't have the words to express it. My mother was fastidious to a fault—she ironed everything, including the bed sheets, our little footed pajamas, and of course those house-

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dresses of hers. Still, there seemed to me something slovenly about life spent in a state of dishabille. A life in a housedress was a life of too much intimacy with the body, and I confess it made me squeamish.

Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, which I read in college, finally gave me a means to explain the queasiness that mothers in housedresses—that my mother in her housedress—stirred up in me. I read de Beauvoir's classic in the English translation, which has been criticized as not only mutilating her existentialism but as exaggerating her misogyny, making her appear too dismissively contemptuous of the life of the majority of women—of those who hadn't gotten doctorates in philosophy from the Sorbonne and become the consorts of Jean Paul Sartre.

I confess, however—and judge me as you will—that I didn't find the descriptions I read in *The Second Sex* as biased against women. Rather, I read them with the startled satisfaction of hearing one's most private, inchoate thoughts given polished public expression. The suggestion of an unseemly intimacy with the body that I'd felt, even as a little girl, in the life my mother led in her housedress is laid bare in de Beauvoir's unsentimental pages. "The species takes residence in the female and absorbs most of her individual life; the male on the contrary integrates the specific vital forces into his individual life." Those specific vital forces turn the individual male outward, merging his identity with "projects" by means of which the ultimate project of transcendence can be pursued.

But woman, though she too has her intimations of transcendence, softens and liquefies in the rising tides of reproductive destiny, "the life of the species," even when that destiny is unfulfilled: "[E]ach month all things are made ready for a child and then aborted in the crimson flow." De Beauvoir's description of female life, stuck fast in immanence, is rife with references to viscous fluids. A woman's life comes off sounding like some sticky syrup of secretions, as runny as a soft-boiled egg. Man's high and dry rational abstractions are lost in the moist goo of particularities to which a woman's life—and so her mind—are given.

De Beauvoir had peered beneath the housedress-or whatever the French equivalent was, which no doubt was something far more chic and sexy. But even in French the sight was not pretty. The life of woman is viscous, fussy, and small. What was more, I *loved* high and dry abstractions. I was, after all, going to college, and then onto graduate school, to study philosophy.

So, sure, I wanted kids, just so long as they didn't confine me to a life of runny immanence, covered over by a fastidiously ironed housedress. It was important to me to know that I would always be able to step over my threshold into the great wide world beyond, that I would belong to that world as it would belong to me. So though I knew that I was the sort of person who would eventually try to have a baby, I also knew that I couldn't be a mother until I had a firm footing outside. I wasn't going to yield an inch of that world to the "life of the species."

And if I didn't want to have to think about what to wear when I got up in the morning, well that's why jeans and T-shirts were invented.

I felt inexplicably guiltless about all this, even though there were expert guiltilizers assigned full time to my difficult case. In particular, my mother and my mother-in-law joined together their considerable forces to convince me that my "insides were going to dry up" if I didn't have a baby, sooner rather than later. I don't precisely know on what they based their medical prognosis, whether the etiology of my gynecological desiccation was, according to them, due to my age (still in my early twenties) or my scholarly inclinations. My professional work was in philosophy of science and—I'll grant those two mothers of mine—it was pretty dry stuff.

I remember a visit to my parents' home for the late-spring holiday of Shavuot when I was 26. I was in the living room, reading, and I could overhear snatches of the conversation that my mother and mother-in-law were having over the kitchen table.

"So, have you spoken to her again about when she's going to have a baby?" asked my mother-in-law.

I felt inexplicably guiltless about all this, even though there were expert guiltilizers assigned full time to my difficult case.

"You know how she is, Leah. She's always got her nose in a book. It's very hard to get her attention. If you could get pregnant from reading books, we'd have 15 grandchildren from her already."

"She's still on the Pill?"

There was something in the way my mother-in-law said those words "the Pill" that made me think of Lenny Bruce's riff on Jewish and goyish: "Dig: I'm Jewish. Count Basie is Jewish. Ray Charles is Jewish. Eddie Cantor is goyish. B'nai Brith is goyish. Hadassah, Jewish. . . .Kool-aid is goyish. Evaporated milk is goyish even if the Jews invented it. Chocolate is Jewish and fudge is goyish, Fruit salad is Jewish. Lime jello is goyish. Lime soda is very goyish. . . ." My mother-in-law had never heard Lenny Bruce and wouldn't have known what to make of him if she had. Nonetheless I think she would have subscribed to some variation along these lines: "Dig. Housedresses are Jewish. Maternity housedresses are very Jewish. Saying you have a headache every night because you already have all the children you want is Jewish. Contraception is goyish. The Pill is *very* goyish."

"On the Pill," repeated my mother in elegiac affirmation. "She's been on the Pill so long who knows whether she can even still have children."

"That's very true. Who knows what that Pill has done to her insides?"

I happened to know, and I smiled conspiratorially at my belly in which my first-born, still indistinguishable from a tadpole, was busily gestating.

I held off telling my mother and mother-in-law for as long as possible about my pregnancy. I knew that the older women in my family would feel that they had me once I had a child, that they would assume that I had forsworn all my ambitions to make my own way in the greater world. They'd smile at one another in that infuriatingly knowing way, convinced that, at long last, I'd slammed the door shut on any more adventures

out there. I hadn't, but I was still insecure enough in my outside footing not to feel that their presumptions would make my path even more slippery.

Sure enough, my mother's gift to me on the birth of my daughter was two housedresses, one solid blue, the other yellow with delicate flowers embroidered on its collar. And the smile with which she handed them over was exactly the one that I'd anticipated. At last, her smile suggested, I understand you through and through. Everything I didn't get about you is now over and done with. I hadn't been mistaken in the semiotics of women's wear. My mother's gift to me confirmed that the housedress stood for all that I'd thought it had, ever since I

DeBeauvoir's description of female life is rife with references to viscous fluids.

was a little girl and dreaded the thought of growing up into one.

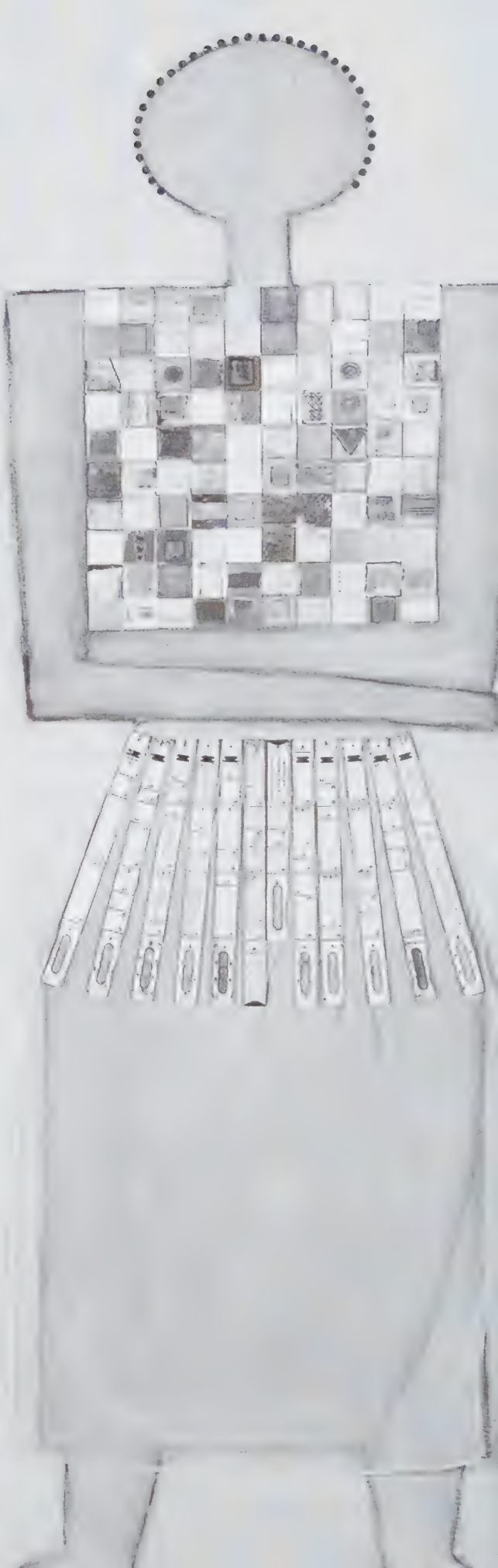
Of course, I never put my mother's gift to use. I kept the two housedresses hanging pristine in the back of my closet, rather than donating them immediately to Goodwill, just for their ironic value. They hung there, like two disapproving matrons, aggressively unattractive, behind the skirts and slacks I wore to work as an assistant professor of philosophy.

My chair at the department had known of my impending motherhood well before my mother. I'd very conveniently timed the birth to occur during winter break, but I was hoping to be able to take off the spring semester to do the bonding about which all the baby books spoke so highly. I knew that it would be no hardship to find a temporary replacement for me, since graduate departments were turning out far more Ph.D.s than could be hired in those days of the academic slump that had resulted from the baby-boomers hitting the market. Yet my chairperson was rather begrudging about the proposition I presented. Unmarried and childless, she turned out to be a pretty committed guiltilizer herself, subtly suggesting that I would not be as useful a member of the department, much less of the scholarly community, once I was a mother. She seemed to suggest that parturition and its aftermath would cause leakage of my philosophical ability.

"I knew you wanted children," she concluded sternly, "But I didn't think it would be so soon." So soon? I felt like answering her (though still well-trained to keep demurral demurely hidden): Would you mind telling my mother and mother-in-law how inappropriately soon you think it is for me to be having a child?

None of these three women ever succeeded in making me feel the slightest bit guilty, however. The either/or dichotomy to which they each subscribed seemed false, at least for me. "Mothers without housedresses" was my fearless motto. "Philosophers with wombs." So I got up every weekday morning, got dressed and walked across my threshold into the outside world…and was overcome, almost to the point of tearful prostration, with scalding lashes of guilt.

Because, of course, where mothers, mothers-in-law, and department chairs couldn't touch me, my infant daughter did. She more than touched me. She grabbed those disputed insides of mine and really worked me over.



DIANE BRAWARSKY "RULER GIRL", 2004. PHOTO BY JOHN MAGGIOTTO. WORK REPRESENTED BY KATHARINA RICH PERLOW GALLERY (PERLOWGALLERY@AOL.COM.)

I could never have anticipated the pangs that I would feel when it was time to go back to work full-time. During the spring and summer, I had bonded like crazy with that amazing little creature, so that by the time the new semester came round the two of us were as close as, well, mother and child. (For some reason, I seemed to be the only one in the university with a five-day week. I suspect my department might have been punishing me for my audacious frivolity: the very idea of actually using a vestigial organ like the uterus.) Not only did I have to leave my infant daughter every weekday, but I had a pretty substantial commute as well. The thought that I would be two-and-a-half hours away should anything ever happen to my daughter was hyper-agony, a noxious cocktail of guilt and worry.

My daughter, as if intuiting that I had extra-maternal intentions for my future, had always rejected a bottle. Talk about guilt. Not only was I two-and-a-half hours away from the poor child, but so were my breasts, her main source of nourishment. A week before going back to work, trying desperately to get her to take a bottle, I finally got her to sip out of one of those tipsy cups, though all she would take in that form was Welch's grape juice. She was eating some solid food by then. So at least she stayed alive while I was off being a philosopher. But needless to say, the moment I could leave my office, I would flee, together with my leaking swollen chest, back to my daughter, beneath the accusatory stare of my chair, silently espousing her commitment to the irreconcilable contradiction between slovenly maternity and the life of the philosopher.

I began to think that perhaps my chair had a point, for life was undeniably messier; and I was aware that there was some sort of systemic mollification that I'd undergone, though I hoped it hadn't progressed to the softening of my analytic reason. But it was undeniable that I was awash in affect, all sorts of gushy emotions, as I'd never been before. Something that had always remained firm and hard in me had given way in this new attachment to life. I was much more given to being moved, lachrymose…Goddamn it, I was downright viscous.

I'd always been able to place myself at a rational distance from life, viewing it from the outside, as it were, abstracting from the identities of the various agents in the situation, even if I were one of them. This sort of extreme objectivity is what the philosophers call the view sub specie aeternitatus—under the guise, or the form, of eternity. The view has much to recommend it, but not if you want to be a mother. Just try keeping your baby alive and contentedly gurgling while living sub specie aeternitatus.

In any case, once I gave birth the form of eternity was as remote a possibility as, say, my husband's taking over the nursing now and then. Philosophical distance was simply impossible when it came to my daughter. Every particularity of her gleamed with significance because she was who she was. She was my daughter, my responsibility, my worry, and my most supreme joy.

No doubt about it, it was the life of immanence. Perhaps, as my glaring chair unsubtly suggested, I was a lesser philosopher for having become so very much of a mother, but that didn't make me feel in the slightest bit guilty. That job belonged to my daughter alone.

Rebecca Goldstein is the author of five novels, including *The Mind-Body Problem, Mazel,* and *Properties of Light*, as well as Strange Attractors, a book of short stories. Her most recent book is *Incompleteness: The Proof and Paradox of Kurt Gödel* (Norton, 2005).

An expanded version of this essay appears in *The Modern Jewish Girl's Guide to Guilt* edited by Ruth Andrew Ellenson (Dutton 2005).

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Different Takes on Intermarriage

Eighteen years ago, Paul and Rachel Cowan published *Mixed Blessings: Marriage between Jews and Christians*, a classic in the literature on intermarriage. Its authors, a man born Jewish who grew up in an assimilated family, and his wife, a New England Unitarian and a descendent of Mayflower Pilgrims (now a Jew by Choice and a Reform rabbi), were candid about their bias in favor of choosing a Jewish life. Their book recounted, in a way that hadn't been done before, the emotional and practical details of marriages between Jews and Christians.

As the rate of intermarriage has accelerated, the controversy over what it means and how to respond has found its way into more and more conferences, programs, sermons and family conversations. What questions do we ask, and of whom? How to understand the data, whether from questionnaires or impromptu conversations, scientific polls or our personal experience? It's not surprising that a schism exists in the Jewish community between those who feel an urgent need to help intermarried couples connect with the Jewish community, and those who regard such activity as a waste of time and resources. Two recent books exemplify different views of the intermarriage reality.

Double or Nothing? Jewish Families and Mixed Marriage by Sylvia Barack Fishman (Brandeis University Press, $24.95) and *Interfaith Families: Personal Stories of Jewish-Christian Intermarriage* by Jane Kaplan (Praeger, $39.95) both rely on interviews with couples, and each adds something new and important. *Double or Nothing* presents background and current data regarding intermarriage (the term used here for those couples where there has been no religious conversion) and how it is affecting and is affected by the Jewish community. *Interfaith Families* provide readable narratives which illuminate the emotions and decisions experienced by individuals contemplating or living with intermarriage: How do we explain our choice to our parents? Can I give up the celebrations I've loved since childhood? What if I feel allergic to religious things my partner's background?

Double or Nothing? is a work based on research Fishman conducted for the American Jewish Committee in 2001, and she notes the support of Steven Bayme, director of the Committee's Department of Contemporary Jewish Life, who has been one of the most consistent voices emphasizing the negative impact of intermarriage on the future of Judaism. Fishman comprehensively covers the historical, religious, cultural and personal perspectives, and those who have been following the emotionally charged communal arguments about the effects of intermarriage on the Jewish community will want to know what she has to say. The current debate has included whether it's ethical for Jewish organizations and schools to deny employment to an intermarried person (either partner, whether Jewish or not), as well as whether resources should be spent on outreach to those deemed marginally Jewish (that is, the intermarried) or more wisely and appropriately spent on those already affiliated and ritually observant.

Given its academic and sociological approach, Fishman's book will be of most interest to clergy, educators, and others concerned with intermarriage issues. I count myself among that group. I am a Jew by Choice, for the past 20 years an active synagogue member and an outreach professional developing ways to draw interfaith families closer to the Jewish community. I see the concerns about interfaith families from both sides.

I understand that my journey may not be the norm. My work has ranged from hauling Jewish soul food from Zabar's in Manhattan for a deli-deprived temple community in Lincoln, Nebraska, to piloting the Conservative movement's *Keruv* ("drawing people near") initiative at my synagogue. I have seen up close the benefits when non-Jews and their Jewish partners feel welcome to explore Judaism, and so I worry about the consequences that may derive from the suggestion in Fishman's title that if both partners are not Jewish there will be "nothing" Jewish in their lives.

More useful (and perhaps more sympathetic) for intermarried couples and their parents is Kaplan's *Interfaith Families*; the author delivers more than 50 portraits of individuals and couples touched by intermarriage, and then steps out of the picture. "There were no experts who stepped in to comment on the material or to offer their interpretations," she writes.

Nearly a generation after the Cowans' groundbreaking work, we hear new themes among the familiar ones. In the past, the non-Jew may have been bewildered when the "uninvolved" Jewish partner insisted on having Jewish children; this has often given way to firmer and more specific demands from the non-Jewish or newly Jewish partner that the Jewish spouse get on board with active participation. For those living directly or by association with intermarriage (which at this point is nearly every Jewish family in America), Kaplan's work provides a welcome opportunity to learn "the kinds of details only someone experiencing a situation firsthand could know."

—Eve Coulson

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continued from page 15

naming ceremony. Another says she got the "hairy eyeball" from temple staff when she, bearing a non-Jewish last name, was trying to organize a bris for her son. Another, participating in a program in Israel for Jewish leaders, had to endure an opening discussion condemning intermarriage. This, despite the fact that these are women actively participating in the Jewish community and raising children who are socially and, because they are born to Jewish mothers, 100 percent Jewish according to Jewish law.

The widely acknowledged revitalization of Jewish life at the end of the twentieth century—new synagogue programs to draw in twenty-somethings, burgeoning Jewish film festivals, concerts of ethnic Jewish music, and more—is influencing intermarried Jewish women. And the influence may be mutual. McGinity pulls out this telling detail: four generations after Mary Antin intermarried in 1901, her great-granddaughter married a Jewish man and is raising a Jewish daughter. "Intermarried Jewish women are part of the revitalization of Judaism," McGinity insists. "They are not apart from it."

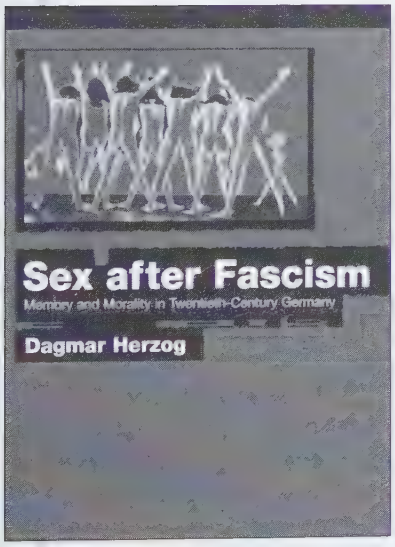
Vassar historian Deborah Dash Moore believes McGinity's work will provide a necessary counterpoint to the popular, overwrought handling of this subject. "This is important because intermarriage for the last decade or more has been used as the fire alarm in the night, the wake-up call to American Jews, generating sufficient anxiety so they'll open their pocketbooks," she says. "A little bit of dispassion from a historical perspective is valuable."

McGinity argues that intermarried Jewish women are now making Jewish homes according to their own definitions of "Jewish." That may be so, but this self-definition sidesteps the question of Jewish continuity—a subject McGinity did not intend her thesis to address. Brandeis professor Sylvia Barack Fishman, author of *Double or Nothing? Jewish Families and Mixed Marriage* (see facing page) says that intermarried Jewish men are significantly less likely to raise Jewish children than are intermarried Jewish women—15 percent to 40 percent, according to Fishman. But the families with the highest likelihood of raising their kids Jewish are those where both parents are Jewish. It simply is the case, Fishman says, that if current rates of intermarriage persist or rise, the population of American Jews will fall.

In the first half of the twentieth century, fewer Jewish women intermarried, suggesting that they were less free to choose non-Jewish spouses. But McGinity's research suggests that they also felt less free, when they did intermarry, to live as Jews. While intermarried Jewish women today may feel freer to marry for love rather than to uphold tradition, they are also freer, thanks in part to feminism's gains, to live comfortably as Jews despite not having—or maybe because of not having—a Jewish spouse.

Jeri Zeder is a freelance writer living in Lexington, Massachusetts.

THINKING ALLOWED



Sex after Fascism

Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany

Dagmar Herzog

Beginning with a new interpretation of the Third Reich's sexual politics and ending with the revisions of Germany's past facilitated by communism's collapse, *Sex after Fascism* demonstrates how Germans made sexuality a key site for managing the memory and legacies of Nazism and the Holocaust.

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This Too a Theory of Modernity

Barbara Hahn

How can women conceive of history after the catastrophes of the twentieth century?

This book begins in the mid-eighteenth century with the first Jewish women to raise their voices in German. It ends 200 years later, with another group of Jewish women looking back at a country from which they had been expelled and to which they would never want to return.

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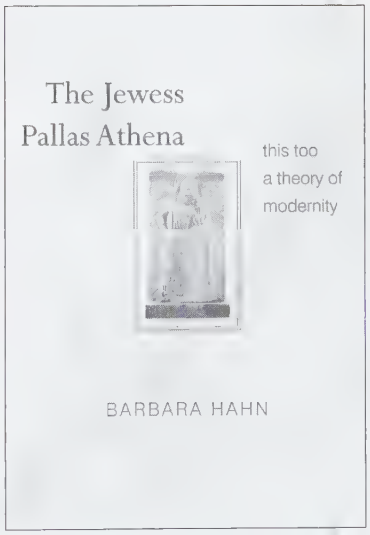

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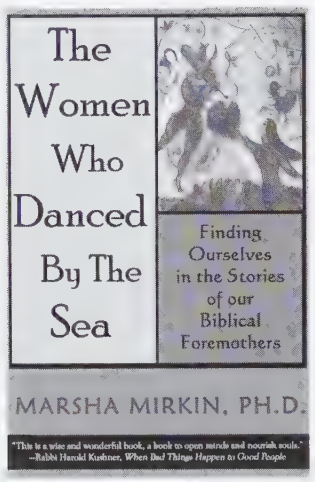
Fresh views of Bible women


The Women Who Danced By The Sea
Finding Ourselves in the Stories of our Biblical Foremothers
MARSHA MIRKIN, PH.D.
"This is a wise and wonderful book, a book to open minds and nourish souls."
--Rabbi Harold Kushner, When Bad Things Happen to Good People

The Bible's women come to life for us—from the **frayed ribbons of their timbrels** to the **kohl that rims their eyes.**

The rabbis teach that each word of the Torah has 70 possible interpretations. Perhaps this accounts for the steady proliferation of Biblical commentaries published each year, including four new books on the women of the Bible. In *Sarah Laughed: Modern Lessons from the Wisdom and Stories of Biblical Women* (McGraw Hill, $24.95), **Vanessa Ochs**, a professor of Jewish Studies at the University of Virginia, retells in vivid novelistic detail a particular moment in the lives of a variety of biblical women. These creative renditions serve as modern midrashim, adding brushstrokes to the Bible's canvas. Thus we see Eve fashioning a table of stone for the home she builds with Adam in Eden; we smell the cracked wheat bread eaten by the daughters of Tzlofhad as they stand in line to speak with Moses; and we feel Sarah's joy when Abraham parts her clothes and makes love to her with the vigor of a man half his age, as the three angels wait patiently in the shade. Ochs draws on traditional midrash to fill in the gaps in the biblical account, though readers in search of more transparency may wonder which details she derives from rabbinic readings and which details she invents. Of course, our inability to distinguish between the two is a tribute to the power of her retellings, which are both richly allusive and deeply sensitive to the cadences of the biblical text.

Ochs identifies each biblical figure she treats as the source of a particular inspirational teaching for contemporary women. The lessons she chooses reflect a freshness of insight that renders them far from obvious. While we might expect to glean from the relationship between Naomi and Ruth the value of women sticking together, Ochs instead highlights the importance of "revising mother-daughter relationships" in light of changing life circumstances. This lesson and others, which are organized into thematic sections such as "being a parent," "healing," and "being wise," will resonate with any modern woman seeking spiritual guidance. However, though Ochs presents original ways in which the women of the Bible can offer wisdom to the women of today, she tries too hard to bring these lessons home. She concludes each chapter with a small ritual which is intended to help the reader internalize the message of each story, but which often seems arbitrary or even hokey. For example, the reader is encouraged to "embrace the gift of Dina" by creating a homemade set of "angel cards" to take with her any time she, like Dina, steps out into new situations.

Ochs writes as a woman speaking to women, with the goal of connecting her readers to "our ancient community of sisters." In contrast, both **Naomi Harris Rosenblatt**, author of *After the Apple: Women in the Bible: Timeless Stories of Love, Lust and Longing* (Miramax Books, $23.95) and **Marsha Mirkin**, author of *The Women Who Danced By the Sea: Finding Ourselves in the Stories of our Biblical Foremothers* (Monkfish, $16.95) write for both women and men. Although each of their chapters is built around a particular woman, they tend to focus just as much on the male characters in their blow-by-blow retellings of the Bible's stories. Perhaps their books are less about women than about what might be considered a feminine way of reading the Bible. Each author interrupts her retelling of the Bible's narratives every few sentences for an insight into gender dynamics, the power of our emotions, or some other universal truth about human nature. These "lessons" tend to be painfully obvious: In her chapter on Rebecca, Rosenblatt informs us that "the story suggests that when all is said and done, character is the one component we can trust in choosing our mate"; in discussing the banishment from Eden, Mirkin teaches us that "whenever we take a growth-producing step, a step toward more wholeness, we also experience a loss."

Both Rosenblatt and Mirkin are psychotherapists, although they have followed opposite paths. Rosenblatt relates that a journey that began with childhood Bible study eventually led her to her work as a psychotherapist; conversely, Mirkin maintains that the lessons about family and community that she learned from psychotherapy led her to a way of interpreting the Bible. This difference is

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reflected in their approaches. Rosenblatt begins with the voices of the biblical women, whose words she often quotes directly, and shows us how they can speak to us today. Mirkin, in contrast, begins each section of each chapter with the annals of modern-day therapeutic situations ("Darlene pondered divorcing her husband...") to show how we, at various moments in our lives, find ourselves in the same position as characters in the Bible. By and large, however, these books represent very similar projects. Both Rosenblatt and Mirkin explain that they see themselves as authors of modern-day midrashim, both emphasize the strength and resourcefulness of the Bible's women without overlooking the patriarchal context in which they lived, and both seek out personal relevance in the experiences of the women whose stories they relate. Nonetheless, each therapist writes from her own personal and professional experiences; thus readers who dance by Mirkin's sea will still find what to savor in Rosenblatt's apple.

In contrast to these three authors, **Tikva Frymer-Kensky**, a professor of Hebrew Bible at the University of Chicago, does not focus primarily on extracting modern lessons from the stories of biblical women. Instead, she examines the Bible's concept of "woman" as a means of shedding light on Israel's understanding of its own history. In *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of their Stories* (Schocken, $15), she convincingly demonstrates through rigorous scholarly analysis that the Bible's women, subordinate but not inferior to their male counterparts, serve as a metaphor for Israel's experience as a nation. Her reading, more than the other three, most empowers the women of the Bible because she shows how they are a model not for individual women in relationship crises, but for the entire nation of Israel. Just as Hagar is oppressed by her mistress Sarah and then joined in a covenant with God in the wilderness, so too are the Israelites oppressed in Egypt and then joined in a covenant with God at Sinai.

In Frymer-Kensky's typology, which divides biblical women into four alliterative categories, Hagar is classified as one of the virgins, whose stories serve as a vehicle for exploring questions of intermarriage, ethnicity, and boundaries with non-Israelites. Then there are the victims, those marginalized and vulnerable women such as Jephthah's daughter whose tragedies indict the societies in which they live. Next are the victors, women such as Rivka and the Egyptian midwives whose determinative role in shaping the history of the Jewish people dramatizes Israel's ability to redeem itself through persistence and faith. And finally there are the voices, the prophetesses and mediums who, in spite of their powerlessness and marginalization, become conduits for the word of God, much as Israel transmits God's teachings to the world.

In each chapter of *Reading the Women of the Bible*, Frymer-Kensky alternates between quoted sections of the Biblical text, which she labels as acts and scenes, and her own "offstage" commentary, in which she often functions as stage-manager, shifting the scenery behind the characters so that their stories become backdrops for one another. Although she writes as an academic, always maintaining the level of discipline and meticulousness that she sets as her standard, her readings are spirited, creative, and refreshing. Whereas other authors draw heavily on the midrashic tradition to round out the stories of the Bible's women, Frymer-Kensky aims at stripping the Biblical characters of the layers of interpretation in which they have traditionally been cloaked. She examines these stories in their proper historical context, drawing on archeology, anthropology, the history of animal husbandry, and surviving documents from contemporaneous Akkadian and Sumerian societies.

Ironically, it is Frymer-Kensky's book that ultimately offers the most profundity of insight into our contemporary situation. Readers who wish to see the Bible's women come to life, from the frayed ribbons on their timbrels to the kohl that rims their eyes, can curl up in an armchair with Ochs' engaging literary vignettes; and those in search of self-help and inspiration will find many passages to underline in Rosenblatt's and Mirkin's more psychological retellings. But those who have the patience for a more intense level of analysis will find that Frymer-Kensky casts the Biblical patterns on a screen with such clarity that we can map our own social reality onto the ancient text without any need for her to explicitly point out the vitality of the Biblical women or the resonance of their situations. Her women of the Bible speak to us on their own.

—Ilana Kurshan

Tikva Frymer-Kensky

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Women as **virgins, victims, voices** or **victors.**

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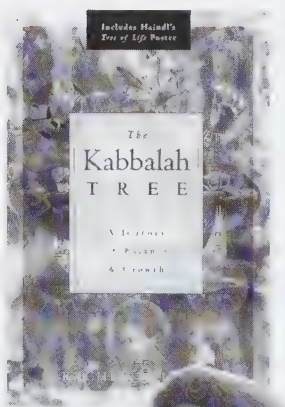
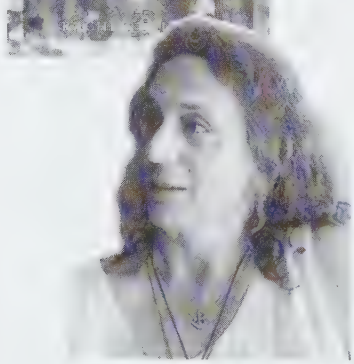
Kabbalah, behind the headlines

Mainstream (and Jewish) popularity of kabbalah, which got a boost in 1997 when **Madonna** embraced it publicly and scores of celebrities followed suit, is more than an overpriced fashion statement of red-string bracelets meant to ward off evil eye. Beneath the hipness of the kabbalah craze lies, for many, a genuine search for meaning. Kabbalah, a Jewish mystical tradition, literally means "received"—via a teacher, or through revelation while meditating on every letter, number, word and story contained within the Torah. It is perhaps most appropriate that this trend exists in a culture where materialism has failed to fully satisfy our thirst for meaning. Women—alternatively viewed in Jewish life as closer to God because of their ability to (pro)create and not holy enough to delve into sacred texts—are seeking particular solace in kabbalah, as two recent books reflect.

In *A New Kabbalah for Women* (Palgrave Macmillan, $21.95), a spunky spiritual seeker named **Perle Besserman** shares her journey from the Orthodoxy of her youth to her embrace of kabbalah. Rejected again and again in her quest for God at her yeshiva because she is a girl, Besserman eventually turns to yoga and Hindu texts and Zen meditation before a coincidental meeting with the kabbalist **Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook** in Jerusalem. He encourages her interest in Jewish mysticism, telling her "there is no other practice for a Jew." Basserman continues to study kabbalah, largely on her own. Though she did study with **Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan**, she conveys a strong sense that most kabbalists didn't believe a women's place is to pore over these sacred texts.

Although the book is written and researched well, I found myself wanting to jump ahead of its analysis of misogyny in Torah and kabbalah texts and get to the transcendent part. I was particularly put off by some of the language she used to describe a childhood friend who became a young ultra-Orthodox mother, using terms like "old hag." But Besserman does a fine job of weaving in the history of kabbalah into her own personal story of learning and practice as a woman. Kabbalistic-style mediations are included for those who want experiential learning.





In many ways, *The Kabbalah Tree: A Journey of Balance and Growth* (Llewellyn Publications, $16.95) by **Rachel Pollack**, delves into the "cosmic map" that many kabbalists recommend students familiarize themselves with before delving into its great mysteries.

Pollack, too, grew up in an Orthodox Jewish home, and found kabbalah after years of exploring Wicca and intuitive tools, such as tarot. Pollack shares multiple ways of looking at one of the kabbalah's most famous symbol, the Tree of Life, showing readers how the 10 *sephirot* (spheres of existence) and the 22 pathways that make up the Tree can serve as a universal organizing principle of understanding the world. She invites readers to inhabit Paradise (PRDS, *pardes*, orchard in Hebrew), which is also the acronym for the the four realms of understanding the Torah—*Peshat* (literal), *Remez* (metaphorical), *Drash* (expository), and *Sod* (secret). This book has clear references to Jewish texts and stories, as well as mathematics, tarot and astrology. Lilith readers will especially enjoy Pollack's thoughtful treatment on the sexual imagery of the Tree, and the implications for women's roles within kabbalah study.

—Yael Flusberg

What we inherit, what we leave

Rosie Meadows, the improbably named narrator and heroine of *Heir to the Glimmering World* (Houghton Mifflin, $24) the new novel by **Cynthia Ozick**, is the furthest thing from an heiress. A motherless child with a callous, mendacious and irresponsible father, she knows from the dawn of her consciousness that she has poor expectations and stands to inherit nothing. In time, her father leaves her an adolescent orphan with an apparently worthless legacy in the form of a torn, stained children's book—about a character known as The Bear Boy—and a pair of men's shoes. Neither can help her stake a claim on life.

But Ozick implies further meanings of the word "heir" by alluding to its homophones. For this *heir* is much like that Victorian icon, Jane *Eyre*. Forced by circumstance to become the amanuensis to a tragic and displaced German Jewish family, Rosie brings watchfulness, patience and compassion to her post.

With the grounded acceptance of one who sees that having no choice is a matter of endurance rather than passivity, she observes the mysterious plots and passions of the Mitwisser family, educating herself in the lessons of the human heart. But unlike Jane Eyre, her triumph is not through marriage to her brooding employer, but through forging her own path as a working woman in the beckoning, glimmering world: "...modernity had granted the chance of untethered motion to my own sex. It was not my destiny to be planted in a single spot of the earth, like that other discarded amanuensis of another century, Dorothea Casaubon...." Ultimately, Rosie's story tells us, there are certain nonnegotiable realities to which we are all heir: gender, time and place. Born in 1915, Rosie is fated to endure the Depression. But by being born in America, she is spared the exile and terror that the Mitwissers suffer as they lose status, possessions, community and sanity in their flight from Berlin. And by the end of the story, she sees that being born a woman limits her options, but constrains her slightly less than it would have in a previous time.

Ozick contrasts Rosie's meager portion with the vast fortune bequeathed to a genuine heir, James A'Bair. Used by his father as the visual model and inspiration for The Bear Boy, James inherits riches beyond measure from the royalties of these phenomenally popular children's books. But this wealth cannot spare him from emotional impoverishment, being used as an object instead of protected and nurtured into growth. As James's and Rosie's fates become entangled and disentangled, each must consider the benefits and impediments of their own and others' endowments. James succumbs to despair. Rosie strikes her blow for freedom. It is not the privileged man who thrives, but the disenfranchised young woman.

Rosie's strength of character is the result of many factors, Ozick shows us, not only her genetic and monetary endowments, but how she rallies her resources to create her own destiny. Fortune is earned, not bequeathed to you. The mature Rose, looking back from an undefined moment after her struggles are over, recounts these events of her youth. Her dignified voice has the gravity of a person reading her own last will and testament. The reader is heir to her glimmering story.

—Robin Roger

New stories, poignant and piercing

There are 11 short stories in this hilarious, touching and bitingly wicked third collection by O. Henry Award-winner **Lynda Schor**. *The Body Parts Shop* (FC2—Fiction Collective Two; http://fc2.org; $14.95). They hit on themes as wide-ranging as American consumerism and the history of lipstick. Sex—desire, as well as obsession—undergirds each piece in a manner both erotic and unpredictable.

In "Coming of Age," a single mother who supports her family by writing inane articles on topics like "How to Talk Sexy to Your Husband in Bed," is baffled by her 14-year-old daughter's growing aloofness. When she eventually discovers that her child is employed as a high-priced call girl, her despair, rage and powerlessness are palpable. Fueling her fury is the fact that her daughter's pimp is a young man named Chico, a.k.a. Arlen Trent Drumwoodie III, son of a conservative Republican U.S. senator. It's a heartbreaking glimpse into a parental nightmare.

"Lips," a meditation on make-up and adornment, merges social history with adolescent angst. Here, an unnamed narrator describes her fascination with cosmetics and brings us into her inner circle. Like her, we cringe and blush at the advances of Marc Ratner, and like her, we squirm with delight as he tentatively makes his first move. Evocative and perceptive, "Lips" crackles with energy and insight.

"Interviewing Barbie" takes another tack. This time, Schor weaves an investigation of the nine-inch plastic bombshell into a narrative about adult doll collectors. The result is entertaining, a blur of laughs and incredulity. "I think the doll strikes an emotional chord in most people," says one aficionado. "She's a cultural artifact without the hard edges. She's the mid-sixties to the mid-seventies, without Viet Nam."

Other stories explore baldness and hair replacement, breasts, the eroticism of dental work, and the mass marketing of violence. Popular culture, from Tarzan movies to couples counseling, from fitness gurus to Columbine-like massacres, are fodder for Schor's keyboard. Indeed, politics meets social critique as Schor deftly derides the commercialism endemic to everyday life. Using satire and humor, she poignantly addresses recognizable social ills. The mix works, showcasing a writer who is smart, sassy and bold.

—Eleanor J. Bader

Baldness, breasts, **the eroticism of dental work...**

An oddly different heroine for Orthodox girls

Her punk clothes are *tzniusdik* (modest) and she hides out in the high school bathroom to write poetry, rather than smoke cigarettes. In *Never Mind the GoldBergs* (Scholastic, $16.95) by **Matthue Roth**, Hava Aaronson relishes her brand of self-expression. Though Orthodox and living in Brooklyn, she cuts and dyes her own hair into various punk styles. Her mother is a workaholic with a powerful career predicting the future of money, and she is being rasied primarily by her father. Surprise: this strong young feminist character comes from a 26-year-old man.

Roth creates a shtetl without insulation in this young adult novel. Hava's best friend in Brooklyn is Ian, her vegan punk Gentile neighbor. Roth starts out describing the rules of Hava's shtetl, then proceeds to show how Hava and her friends negotiate with them while they figure out where they will eventually "hold."

Hava leaves New York, where her friends are often overly preoccupied with checking to see which couples dare to hold hands in public. She travels to a callous Hollywood to star in a sitcom about a modern Orthodox family; offstage, she navigates and stands up for her own boundaries in a whole new universe. On the set of the sitcom "The Goldbergs"—described by one of its producers as a "Jewish 'Cosby Show'"—Hava eats cold kosher sandwiches from home every day, watching others eat hot gourmet food. Acclimating to her own importance, she demands decent kosher food on the set. Most shocking to her cast-mates, she realizes it is already dusk and simply walks off the lot during an important point in the filming, wandering around L.A. until she finds a place for *Shabbes*.

Roth says he knew from the start that the protagonist in his debut novel would be a strong female. "I saw her character in my head,

Our Reviewers

Eleanor J. Bader, coauthor of *Targets of Hatred: Anti-Abortion Terrorism* is a frequent contributor to progressive feminist publications.

Rachel Kranson is a doctoral candidate in Jewish American history at New York University.

Ilana Kurshan is freelance writer and editor.

Robin Roger, a writer and psychotherapistin Toronto, edits *The Literary Review of Canada* and *Ars Medica, A Journal of Medicine*, *The Arts and Humanities*. She said, "I notice from your other bios that people don't mention their domestic situations. I have two teenage children, a husband and two dogs, and these are also a big part of how I spend my time."

Natasha Rosenstock is a writer living in Washington, DC.

Yael Flusberg is a writer and a yoga, meditation, and reiki practitioner. The daughter of a Holocaust survivor, she has delved into Jewish mysticism as a way of understanding how her generation can help heal from and transform this powerful legacy.

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spunky, anti-authoritarian, in-your-face, and a woman. I've always seen an undercurrent in traditional Jewish storytelling, Hasidic stories especially, with women characters who were strong in unconventional ways. I wanted to . . . have someone who could be a strong woman in that my-body-my-vote way, but also in a way of coming into her own intellectually and socially."

Hava is not looking to escape her neighborhood in reaction to the trite (if true) constraints of a stifling Orthodoxy or a cruel patriarchy. Rather, she's motivated by a more universal yearning for freedom, independence and self-expression. That magical time between adolescence and adulthood when we are not afraid to dream is captured here. One day Hava is bored in Yiddish class, sneaking off to the bathroom to listen to her Hole CD on her Discman and the next day she is flying to L.A. to become a star, without even bothering to make a list of the pros and cons of such a bold move. She has an opportunity for change in her life, and without knowing what will come next, she goes for it.

Roth grew up in what he describes as a semi-observant home in Philadelphia. He took up religion again in college. Now in L.A., he is working on a novel about an old European Jewish ghetto and the "ghetto" of Manhattan's Upper West Side.

—Natasha Rosenstock

Early 20th-Century Jewish girls

"I am becoming common place, ordinary, the very thought of it maddens me," wrote 16-year-old Marie Syrkin in her diary in 1915. This diary, as **Melissa Klapper** points out in *Jewish Girls Coming of Age in America* (New York University Press, $45), allowed Syrkin to combat her fears of anonymity. Her adolescent writings and those of other young Jewish women give us a unique window into the lives of this middle-class, educated cohort. While Syrkin herself became a well-known author of Zionist history later on in her life, most of the two dozen diarists and 150 memoirists that Klapper uncovers in this excellent study of turn-of the-last century Jewish girlhood were written by women and girls who never achieved great recognition outside of their own circle of family and friends. In their writings, however, they insist upon the value of their own life experiences, no matter how "common place" they might have seemed to others. Klapper takes their claims seriously, allowing them to emerge as distinct subjects of their own history.

Scholars have been slow to legitimize girls' understanding of themselves as significant historical actors. According to Klapper, most of these diaries that she

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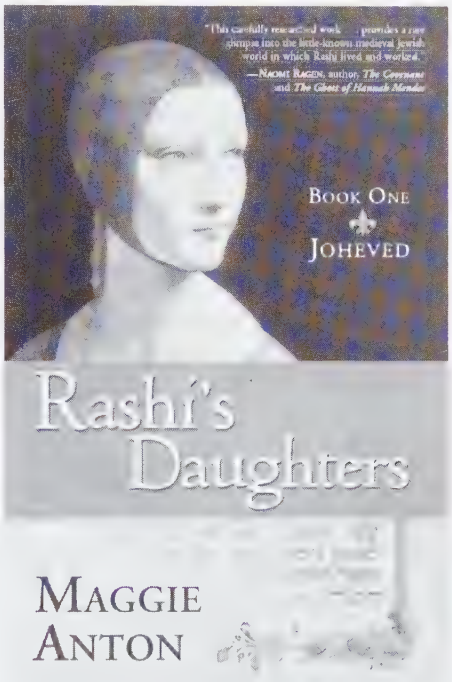
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Until now, Jewish women's history has tended to study immigrant, working-class strikers **rather than middle-class teenage diarists.**

found had "languished unread and appreciated" in historical archives; she culled them from collections across the U.S. In an academic climate in which Jewish women are but a side note of American women's history, Jewish women's history tends to study immigrant, working-class strikers rather than middle-class diarists, and the study of adolescence remains quite small. Klapper found a rich, untapped source in these personal writings.

The diaries reveal how popular conceptions of what it meant to be American, Jewish, young, and female shifted drastically during this time, and Klapper painstakingly traces these changes. She notes, for instance, that Jewish girls' willingness to rebel against their traditional families increased over the course of the twentieth century, as a distinct and oppositional youth culture developed in the United States. The diaries, then, provide crucial insights into the complex development of all of these identities. Frieda Fligelman, who struggled to attend college instead of finishing school, wrote that finishing school "made ladies out of the crudest of us. [But] no lady would go to college. That was a little crude." Surrounded by a culture that was beginning to support women's education as well as the independence of youth, Fligelman overrode her parent's wishes to turn her into a "lady." Against their better judgment, they agreed to send her to college.

Klapper remains true to the spirit of her subjects by including their personal words and stories, in addition to uncovering general historical trends. Fannie Hurst tells of her misery while attending a St. Louis private school at which the headmistress had little affection for her Jewish students; Helen Jacobus writes of how moved she had been to see her mother bless the Sabbath candles "with the ancient blessing of the women of Israel"; Ann Green attempts to juggle her English and Spanish classes at the University of Maine with her involvement in the mandolin club, dramatic club, concerts and dances. Jennie Franklin reflects in her diary on the difficult transition of moving from

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childhood to adulthood: "Another year of my life gone by..." she wrote on her 17th birthday in 1890, "...am beginning to feel that it is high time for me to definitely shape my career and awaken to the duties of a woman." Her insecurities over this process emerged two months later: "I don't know what is the matter. I would like to know whether there are any other girls in this whole world like myself." Klapper's book shows that there were.

For middle-class Jewish girls at the turn of the century, the constraints of age and gender allowed them few opportunities to express their desires, thoughts and fears. For many of them, diary writing became a primary means of establishing a sense of their own worth. With insight and sensitivity, Klapper has listened to their words and reconstructed their world. Anyone interested in the history of gender, Jewishness or adolescence will benefit from the resulting project.

—Rachel Kranson

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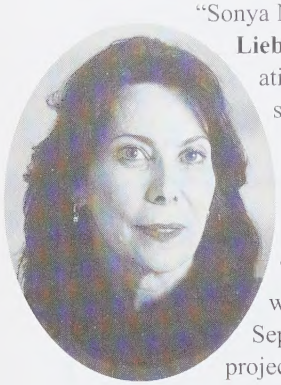
Introducing American audiences to Israeli plays. **Eretz Theater Reading Series** presents Israeli plays in English, directed and performed by Americans and Israelis. In May, "Sonya Mushkat," **Savyon Liebrecht's** drama of relatives and their servant struggling with the horrors of the Holocaust and a dark family secret riveted the audience. The monthly series will begin again in September. It's a joint project of *The Israeli Consul for Cultural Affairs, israelfm.org/culture, and Personal Space Theatrics, (212)802-4537; personalspacetheatrics.org*



An Olive on the Seder Plate is a multimedia performance exploring how progressive Jews wrestle with the Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Jewish musicians, performers, educators and activists address anti-Semitism and take a strong pro-Jewish and pro-Palestinian stand. *Libertycabbage.org*

The Feminist Press was founded in 1970 by **Florence Howe.** Like other presses, including Lilith magazine, it has seen itself fulfilling poet **Muriel Rukeyser's** question and answer: "What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life? The world would split open." In appreciation of importance of women's writing and the value of the Feminist Press's booklist**, Ellen Bass**, author of *The Courage to Heal* (which helped shift the way our society responds to child sexual abuse) will match your contribution. Send your check, made out to the Feminist Press, to: *Ellen Bass, PO Box 5296, Santa Cruz, CA 95063; feministpress.org*

Another Side of Peace follows the internal journey of Roni Hirshenzon, an Israeli man who lost his oldest son, Amir, in a suicide bombing. Five years later, his son Elad committed suicide when his best friend was killed by another bomb. Putting anger and despair aside, Hirshenzon co-founded The Parents Circle, a support group for bereaved Israeli and Palestinian families. Their message is simple: no more killing. The mothers, hardly seen on screen, cooperated in the film-making. They tended to be more private in expressing their grief, said filmmakers, **Ellen Frick** and **Gretchen Burger.** *anothersideofpeace.org*

Under One Canopy: Readings in Jewish Diversity. This 150-page collection of readings by Sephardi, Ashkenazi, Mizrahi, African and Asian Jews, edited by **Karen Primack,** contains the "Four Questions" in the African language of Luganda. Start now to plan for next year's seder. From Kulanu, the organization that assists lost and dispersed Jewish communities around the globe. $15. *KulanuBoutique.com*

The Sexual Assault Emergency Treatment Service at Poriya Government Hospital was established in 2002. Near Israel's borders with Jordan and Syria, Poriya serves a population of over 100,000, including Jews, Christians, Circassians and Druze, and the hospital says referrals have grown exponentially as awareness of the service increased. To help support this program, mail your check with *Poriya Government Hospital* in the memo to *P. E. F. Israel Endowment Funds, 317 Madison Ave., #607, New York, NY 10017.*

The DIN Handbook. Jewish victims of domestic abuse residing in NewYork have legal rights and obligations that are determined not only by secular courts, but also by Jewish courts— *battei din* (plural—*beit din*, singular). These victims, mostly women, must obtain a Jewish divorce (*get)* in order to remarry. With support from the Jewish Women's Foundation of New York and the Betty Retter Foundation, **Margaret Retter**, founder of DIN Legal Centers, has written a pocket-size legal resource guide with information about the often ad hoc composition of many *battei din. DIN Legal Centers, (212)804-5746; dinlegal@aol.com*

"A Biography of Lilith" and "The House of Science: A Museum of False Facts" are two films by **Lynne Sachs** now on one DVD. A lively mix of narrative, collage and memoir, "Biography of Lilith" updates the creation myth by telling the story of the first woman (and, for some, the first feminist).

Lilith's betrayal by Adam in Eden and subsequent vow of revenge is recast with present-day Lilith musing on a life that has included giving up a baby for adoption and working as a bar dancer. Interweaving mystical texts with interviews, music and poetry, the DVD includes discussions with scholars **Tikva Frymer-Kensky** and **Naomi Mark** about the Lilith myth. 65+ minutes, $19.95 from Blackchair DVD. *www.microcinema.com*

A Tel Aviv tea party? Placing the Middle East center stage is the goal of Golden Thread, a San Francisco organization which produces alternative theater from that region, including Israel, in the United States. One recent production was "Bounty of Lace" by **Susan Merson** in which a tea party of four Israeli women ends up exploring the romantic boundaries of this politically fraught region. *(415)626-4061; goldenthread.org*

Have you ever lived in Israel? To find out how "Israeli" North American immigrants to Israel feel, a graduate student at the Hebrew University is asking current or former North American *olot* or *olim*, either in Israel or now living abroad, to fill out a questionnaire accessible at *http://aliyasurvey.250free.com*; questions: *aliya.survey@gmail.com.*

Spirituality in Our Lives is a conference for Jewish women on July 10, sponsored by Chochmat Halev, the combination meditation center, academy and havurah. Keynote by **Anita Diamant**, and a panel discussion with **Judy Massarano, Chaplain Nicole Bloom, Rabbi Margaret Holub** and **Cantor Linda Hirshhorn**, and communal silk painting project led by **Nancy Katz**. July 10 at Congregation Emanu El in San Francisco. *(888)383-4325; chochmat.org*

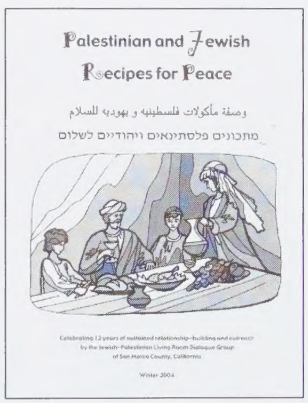
"Grief's rain fills many streams/ which flow and ebb/and finally soothe." Comfort cards with photographs of the natural world, short poems of hope and comfort by poet **Davi Walders,** and space for your personal message are $16 for a box of 12 different cards. Proceeds benefit American Hospice Foundation programs that serve terminally ill and grieving people of all ages. *americanhospice.org*

Ars Medica, Canada's only literary medical journal, publishes well-crafted writing about illness, healing and art. Managing editor **Robin Roger** invites Lilith readers to submit letters, queries and submissions of previously unpublished poetry, essays, fiction, creative nonfiction and medical history. *ars-medica.ca*

Meet women peace activists from all over the world at the Women in Black International Conference for Ending Occupation, War and Violence, August 12-16 in Jerusalem. Sessions will be translated simultaneously into Arabic, Hebrew, English, Spanish, French, and Italian. *coalitionofwomen.org* or write to *wib2005@netvision.net.il*

WesternWallPrayers.com A family- run enterprise in Jerusalem allows people anywhere to request prayers on their behalf at the holiest site in the Jewish world. **Batya Burd** came up with the idea after meeting her future husband 10 days after he'd finished 40 days of prayer at the Western Wall. Prices range from $2-$9/day, depending on whether the agent (a man or a woman) is praying for more than one person.

Yad Vashem database reunites survivor families. Last November this central database of Shoah victims became accessible online. Shortly thereafter, two sisters, who each thought she had lost the other, were reunited after 60 years as a result of the searching of one of their children. The Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names contains some 3 million names; *Yadvashem.org*



Bulgur, tahini, mint, za'atar, paprika, pepper, dill, cabbage, beets, barley, cinnamon, dates, mingle in the pantries of the members of the Jewish Palestinian Living Room Dialogue Group of San Mateo County, California, now celebrating 12 years of relationship-building and outreach. They have just published *Palestinian and Jewish Recipes for Peace*. 100 pages; $15 plus $4 shipping. Order from *Libby Traubman, 1448 Cedarwood Drive, San Mateo, CA 94403; (650)574-8303; traubman.igc.org/recipes.htm*

—compiled by Naomi Danis

www.Lilith.org

Messengers from a New Place

Elaine Shizgal Cohen offered the following words on the occasion of her daughter's commitment ceremony last year

The truth is that for many of us, including Steve and me, this celebration of a commitment ceremony is a first. And it's very powerful that it is our first-born daughter's celebration that we are consecrating this evening.

Tamara's *parasha* when she became a bat mitzvah was *Shlach Lecha*. In it we read about the scouts who go into the land to explore a new place. We know that the majority came back saying that it was a terrifying place. But there were two who said, "This place is good." This is a place of opportunity and beauty and the future.

And so it has been with our scout, Tamara, who has brought us to this place and taught us that it is good.

We are here with all of you in fullness—fullness of spirit, fullness of mind. The hagada that Tamara compiled and edited a few years ago for Ma'yan is called *The Journey Continues*. And, indeed, for us it has been a journey to reach this place. A journey that began with awareness, moved to recognition, through acknowledgment and acceptance, culminating in an open embrace. And this journey will continue. On her way and through the new land, of course, Tamara brought Gwynn to us. We could see immediately her qualities of fineness, caring and integrity. Over the years we came to see and appreciate her very loving side too, and how you, Gwynn are a very rooted and anchored person who complements wonderfully Tamara's fluctuations of spirit. As your mother, Tamara, I say with pleasure that you have been—and continue to be—my teacher, as you are a teacher and an inspiration to so many of us in this room, and we take such great pride in you.

Were my mother were here today, I know that she would be joyful, celebrating and feeling very avant-garde! I asked Grandma—Steve's mother—who *is* here with us, "How do you think Grandpa would have dealt with this, on *his* journey, Tamara marrying a woman?" And she said, with all of her practical wisdom, "He would have had to!" And you know, I think he would have. And, even at this joyful time, we are very sad that my father could no longer make meaning of his experience, let alone the experience of others. But one thing I know about him is that he loves his granddaughters, and I am confident that despite his decline he continues to.

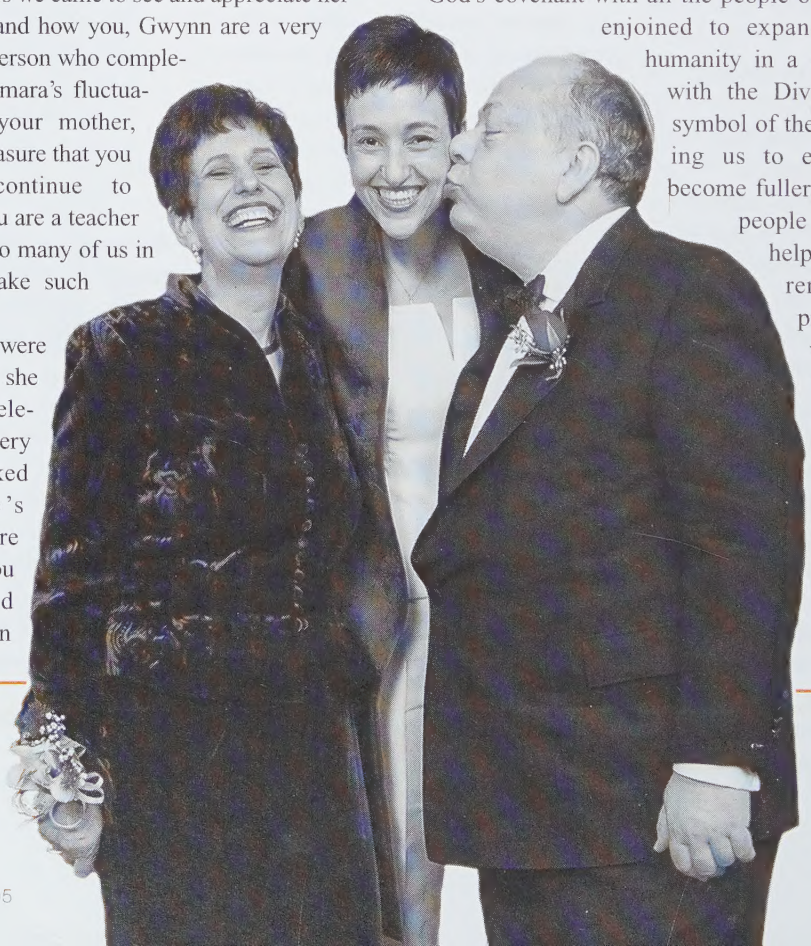
So as we move along this journey, I want to recall two *brachot*; first, the blessing said when you hear a thunderstorm. Sometimes, it's hard in the midst of a storm to remember that there is a blessing to recite even at a time of fear and confusion, that God's power and presence fill the whole world always.

When Phyllis called up people for *aliyot* this morning, she invited those who saw themselves as exhibiting the quality of tenacity. I am one of them. And I think that you know, too, that my love is anchored in tenacity and holds on through stormy episodes as well as peaceful times. My huge love for you can still grow, and it will continue to grow.

This evening's celebration includes many who identify as "rainbow people," and I want to close with remembering that the *bracha* of the rainbow is *zocher habrit*. God remembers God's covenant with all the people of the world, and we are enjoined to expand and exemplify our humanity in a covenantal relationship with the Divine under the arching symbol of the rainbow. You are leading us to enlarge our hearts to become fuller, better, and more open people so that we each can help partner with God and remember the Divine promise of making this world a place where all will live a life filled with love, dignity and embrace.

Let's all raise that glass together and toast Tamara and Gwynn and this moment of love and sanctification.

L'chaim!



L-R: Elaine S. Cohen, Tamara Cohen, Stephen P. Cohen